MEMORIES OF A HALF LIFE
AND
FLOWERS OF GRASS

RIKHI JAIPAL

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PREFACE

"What you run away from runs after you" is an old Romanian proverb. It has been true of my past. It has caught up with me from time to time, kept me company for a while and deserted me when my memory weakened. It has been nagging me to let it express itself. Time has a pitiless tendency to conquer memory, and before that process begins I have let my past have its say. I have maintained towards it a semi-Freudian tolerance so as to permit the revelation of only that which may be told. Some secrets must live and die with me. And so the title "Memories of a Half-Life".

Looking back after a longish career consisting mainly of a ten-to-six daily routine, which is the opiate of all diplomats, it is the exceptions that stand out, both experiences and impressions, and they are unique to myself in time and circumstance. I have tried to mix them with small doses of autobiography and a larger measure of events, issues and personalities. They are of little importance to historians, but may have some interest for contemporary readers.

At the end of the memoirs is a selection of my effusions in verse spanning several years. They provide a change for the reader, as writing them has been a welcome diversion from contemplating the affairs of states and statesmen. I have given them the title "Flowers of Grass", from the words in the first epistle of Peter – "The glory of man is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away." It is time for my fallen flowers to be placed between the leaves of this book. "For my day is done and I am like a boat beached on the sands of time listening to the music of even-tide", to quote Tagore.

My thanks to my wife for her partnership and her own contributions and sacrifices to my career, and for putting up with my disposition during the writing of this and other books. I am deeply obliged to S.S. Raman and R.V. Gopalaswamy of the United Nations for their invaluable assistance in seeing the manuscript through its various stages to its final printed form.

TO

Sheila, Priya and Rashmi
my only links with life.

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1.

EARLY YEARS

Such fossils of remembrance as were prised out of my subconscious self suggest that my mother used to say that I was in Burma before I was born in India, then a common enough feat when a woman conceived in her place of residence and went home to give birth at her mother's. My father was practising law in Rangoon, having gone there to seek his fortune when Burma was annexed in 1885 by the British and made a Province of India. He later gave up law as it depressed him having to deal with the seamy side of life, and turned to teaching as his chosen profession, which gave him an immense sense of fulfilment. He had a passion for mathematics and athletics, neither of which to his regret I inherited.

He made sure that I did not go to the school where he taught! But in ways that were not obvious he guided my acquisition of knowledge by planting interesting books in the most unlikely places at home for me to discover and devour. Plutarch's *Lives of Great Men*, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Joseph Abbott's *Napoleon* and the *Norse and Greek Legends* thus came my way to supplement the English literary fare I found at school. The tales from Ramayana and Mahabharata I absorbed from itinerant minstrels and players during the school vacations spent at my village. And stories from the Bible were fed to me at home.

My mother was a gentle compassionate soul whom I was to lose in my fifteenth year, a loss that deeply impacted on my psyche. Her mother, a widow, survived her, and I was very attached to her. She was one reason I spent the vacations at my village, where she presided serenely and efficiently over the destinies of our lands, crops, cattle and "untouchable" labour force. Two of her cousins, both my grand-uncles, poet philosophers in the ancient tradition, used to tell me many fascinating things.

One of them, the poet, on my asking how old the earth was replied, "Put out your ten fingers and count them in descending order beginning with the number 4—thus the earth is 4,321,000,000 years old." I

had forgotten this remarkable story until it came to mind recently, when I read about scientific evidence indicating that the earth was probably 4.5 billion years old!

During a marvellous trip to the temple town of Srirangam with the other grand-uncle, the philosopher, I persisted in questioning him about the whereabouts of God. To my childish disappointment he answered, "God is within every one of us, and if we are lucky, we may come to know Him." He was apparently an agnostic doomed to seek forever the psychological enigma within him. There were many strange things in this world, he said, and nothing was more wonderful than man, and nothing more pitiful.

The dominant influence in my formative years was my father. He was an ardent advocate of character-building through discipline, obedience and punctuality, all of which used to affront my free and rebellious spirit. I used to be thrashed regularly by him for the good of my soul and since it did not really hurt, I felt it was administered on principle. The thrashings ceased suddenly one day when he told me that they were no longer necessary, as I had reached the age of discretion. It was my twelfth year and I went wild with relief, until I was reminded that one was expected to behave responsibly at twelve! That was the precondition for immunity from thrashing!

I cannot remember that there was any particular point to my schooling. The absorption of knowledge as if through a blotting paper presented few problems for me, though the memorising of an endless stream of useless information was far from pleasurable. Schooling for me was not the careless rapture or the frightful bore it has been to some, but it certainly seemed a prolonged and terrible waste of time. Cramming and games left no room for education, and pranks were severely held in rein by the forbidding personality of the Principal. He was a tall, tough, irascible Frenchman, Father Sellas, who wore a black gown below a fearsome red beard and carried a menacing cane. He took no classes, directed school plays, joined in football games and generally lurked about in corridors and corners. I do not believe he ever hurt anyone but he surely put the fear of God into everyone. The masters were mostly Jesuit brothers from Ceylon who failed to generate either enthusiasm or inspiration in the boys of St. Anthony's. One of these brothers, a Latin scholar and soi-disant genius, answered my favourite question about God thus: "He is like a circle the centre of which is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere" — a mathematical conundrum that eluded me.

I was glad to leave school for college. Growing up was such an

infernally lengthy process for humans, whereas most animals seemed to have a much shorter time of it. I remember that my utmost ambition then was somehow to reach the ripe old age of forty. College life was a wholly refreshing experience. I joined University College in Rangoon, which had a brand new campus. It was well laid out along the shores of a large lake, a few miles out of town, a vast area with an extensive network of roads and lanes, lawns with flowering hedges and imposing trees, eight residential Halls named after historic sites, a dozen playing fields and superb tuck shops with Burmese, Indian and Chinese food. It was an under-grad's dream with co-educational classes, freshers' dances, swimming and boating in the lake — indeed it was altogether another world.

The Heads of Faculties were British, except for Physics which had an Indian scientist on temporary loan from Calcutta. The lecturers were a mixed lot. They were an odd bunch, some plainly rejects from elsewhere, some zealous pioneers dedicated to improving young minds, and some serving time until something better turned up. Principal Sloss fancied himself a great Shakespearean actor and classicist. Prof. Pearn, the English Head, loathed the Principal and frowned furiously upon any forms of expression other than basic English. His deputy Forbes urged his students, except the girls, to quit the English Department and transfer to the sciences. Prof. Peacock of the Chemistry Department vented his spleen on his charges with revolting fluency, making it plain that if he were to succeed in teaching them how to think for themselves, he would have earned his entirely inadequate salary. The Economics Prof. MacSomething was obscure to the point of not being there most of the time. The History Prof. Luce was more interested in collecting material about pagodas in Pagan than in teaching. The Maths Prof. Owen failed to communicate and his amiable dullness was an unfailing inspiration to his alumni to follow suit.

The students were left mostly to themselves and pursued their own diverse interests. Football was our consuming flame and we contributed liberally to a fund for our University team, which won the national championship three years in a row. Our other undying love was the University Students' Union, where I served as an editorial writer for its journal. Its declared objective was unfettered national independence, and in this it was way ahead of the political parties in the land, which were then interested only in Burma's separation from India! The leaders of the Union eventually became the architects of Burma's independence and had no qualms about the use of violent methods, or collaboration with the Japanese military in order to

liquidate British colonial rule. The President of the Union, Aung San, became the first Prime Minister, and his Vice President, U Nu, the second Prime Minister. Ne Win, an active Union member, overthrew U Nu later in a military coup. The Editor of the Union's journal, U Thant, found himself years later in the unlikely role of UN Secretary General. Curiously enough, the British staff of the University seldom interfered with the seditious activities of the Union, and managed to keep British officialdom and the police out of the campus.

The brittle and somewhat unreal life at the University came to an end too soon, when I passed out with a report from the Principal that was noteworthy for its brevity and precision: "Won a scholarship to the University. Intelligent, though somewhat careless. His catholicity of interest may be the making of him. He should go far if he were to curb his peculiar sense of humour." Since then I have tried to be generally more careful, and my punning came to a natural end when it was met outside student circles with withering apathy.

I had to find some work to maintain myself. Like a few of my contemporaries, I joined the British Government in Burma after surviving the written examinations and the dreaded viva voce, at which I was grilled by Chief Secretary Booth-Gravely about the fiery articles I had penned for the Students' Union journal. He evidently dismissed them as lacking revolutionary potential, for he recruited me saying he hoped that I would put my pen to more constructive uses in future. My period of probationary service, which I had begun to enjoy, was rudely cut short by Hitler's war. With the younger British officials opting for military service, locals like me were moved up and around quite a bit to sample various aspects of administration. I finally came to rest in Home Affairs under the Chief Secretary.

For the British, everything began to fall apart rapidly in Europe and North Africa under the Nazi onslaught. To Burma, however, the war brought a sort of boom – more jobs more promotions and more pay. I was required once to apprehend and take into custody two spies – Schmidt of Holland and Sato of Japan, both of whom had played tennis with me. Sato said to me enigmatically (he was also my dentist) that he did not expect to stay long in Rangoon Central Jail. Events then marched in quick procession. The Japanese Army "liberated" Rangoon and Sato on 8 March 1942, three months after the attack on Pearl Harbour.

The War in Burma

I have run ahead of my story and I must go back to 11 December 1941, when I was on night watch on the roof of the Secretariat with John Hall, a middle ranking British civilian. We heard the BBC news reporting the sinking of "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse", the pride of the Royal Navy, by Japanese dive-bombers and their kamikaze (suicide) pilots, east of Malaya where they had been positioned for the defence of Singapore. Hall went quite pale, brooded for a while and said, "It is all over now. The Japs will be here soon." He explained that the defence of Malaya, Burma, India and Australia was dependent on the integrity of Singapore, and once that was breached, there was nothing to prevent the landing in Burma of Japanese forces. The Japs already controlled the air and soon were to have command of the seas. His assessment, which I then thought was unduly pessimistic, proved to be accurate.

The British Governor of Burma, Reginald Dorman-Smith, kept up a brave facade and went on the air to say that British, Australian and Indian troops would soon be coming to defend Burma, but they never came. The powerful Tokyo radio announced the Jap army's daily invasion secrets in advance and in detail with dates and places of landing, and followed it up later by confirming that the invasion was going according to plan. Jap invincibility mesmerised the people; it gained credibility as town after town fell in quick succession. The people were grateful for the advance notice, for it enabled them to quit in time with their belongings and disperse in the countryside. And our meagre defence forces likewise scattered quietly into the jungle. The odds were heavily in favour of Japan. With the advancing Jap army 30 young Burmese student leaders returned including Aung San and Ne Win, who had earlier fled to Japan for military training. They brought the heady news that after the liberation of Burma from British rule, Japan would grant independence to the Burmese people.

Singapore fell on 15 February 1942. Burma was the next strategic target, for the Japanese wanted to cut the supply road to China through Rangoon. The Japanese advance on Burma began on 16 January 1942 with attacks on the southern ports of Tavoy and Mergui, which capitulated without a fight. They then moved north to take Moulmein in the last week of January; an Indian brigade had given fight at Kaw-Kareik but was overwhelmed. Three Indian brigades that formed the 17th Division held the line at Salween river for some days and engaged the Japs in a fierce battle at Bilin, but were forced to retreat westwards to Sittang river. The Japs followed and drove them to Pegu river, where

another line was established for the defence of Rangoon.

Meanwhile, for those of us at Rangoon the signs had been clear enough, ever since the Xmas bombing of the city by waves of Jap aircraft, which flew low reconnoitring, bombing and strafing the civilian population. The seas were also open to Jap submarines and ships. And the evacuation to India of non-essential Government personnel by the long overland route began when the 'E' signal went up on 20 February, on learning that the Japs were at Pegu river. Thereafter, Rangoon became a ghost city with only "last ditchers" like me left behind to implement the scorched earth policy and quit just before the Japs arrived. We were given powers of requisition, which I used liberally to acquire transportation, food items and other provisions and distributed them to hospitals, convents and others who were staying put. Japanese air-raids increased night and day to soften us up before the final assault on the capital city, which was expected by land and sea early in March 1942. My boss Chief Secretary W.H. Payton and other British officials flew out to Calcutta for safety; the rest of us were told to find our way to India overland.

It was at this critical moment that a group of some 30 Jewish refugees, men and women, turned up at my office for help. They had been on the run from Hitler since his attack on Poland. They went east to Russia and when Hitler invaded USSR in 1941, they moved on to Siberia, Mongolia, China and Hong Kong where they stayed for a while. And when Japan began its own onslaught, they fled south to Singapore and then on to Rangoon. They were in desperate straits and their demand was to be evacuated to India. I had them put up in requisitioned quarters and provided them with food, clothing and transport. I was under strict instructions from Delhi not to issue visas for India without first obtaining permission. There was of course no question of referring to Delhi for prior permission, for all communications had been cut. Were I to refuse visas, they would be taken by the Japs and handed over to the Nazis.

I was not going to be responsible for that happening and so on my own authority and on humanitarian grounds I issued visas to them on their tattered travel documents. I still had to get them out of Burma to India and the only means available were the aircraft that occasionally landed at Rangoon bringing supplies from Calcutta. On one of these aircraft I loaded them one morning and had them all flown to Calcutta. They were an extraordinary bunch and I remember only a few names now—Aronson, the banker; Reisz, the physician; Silverman, the musician; and Shapiro, the engineer. They remained in India during the war and later went off to the USA, Canada, UK and Australia. When I got back to India, I was taken to task by the Government of India for the unauthorized issue of visas to these "enemy nationals"!

Rangoon was about to fall to the Japs, when for reasons known only to Churchill and God, General Harold Alexander arrived by air on 5th March with orders to hold the doomed capital and failing that to defend Upper Burma, with the help of Generals Stillwell of USA and Chiang Kai Shek of China who were commanding the 5th and 6th Chinese armies. The Japs somehow got wind of this and prepared to take Alexander. They intensified their air attacks, brought their naval vessels up the Rangoon river and moved their land forces forward from Pegu to cut Alexander's escape out of Rangoon. There was only one option and that was to fight our way out of Rangoon, and Alexander decided to do so. I was lucky to be in his last convoy.

Alexander sent out patrols to probe Jap positions on the road out of Rangoon, which ends at a fork near Hmawbi, where the roads from Prome in the west and Pegu in the east meet. The Japs had dug themselves in at the fork but they were a relatively small group. Their main force had yet to arrive from Pegu. And so without further ado Alexander engaged the Japs at Hmawbi and routed them. Our convoy then swung westwards with full speed to Prome, leaving behind a strong force to delay the enemy. The Japanese missed a wonderful catch. What I remember of Alexander was his reputation for bearing a charmed life, having been the last British commander at Dunkirk. He was always in good humour and exuded calmness and quiet confidence, when the rest of us felt trapped and wanted to go back to Rangoon to be flown out, if possible. Two days later the Japs took Rangoon, and its loss meant the loss of Burma. Alexander marched with what was left of his force into Imphal in India on 17 May just missing the rains, with the Japs not far behind.

I broke away from Alexander's convoy at Prome, for I had my own duties "to ditch last and scorch the earth". It was a policy that I thoroughly disagreed with, as its practical effect was to deny the Burmese people some of their essential requirements. And so I and a few others who felt the same way implemented this policy in a very restricted fashion. We destroyed only Treasury notes and petrol dumps, and left intact other installations for the use of the public.

While halting briefly at Prome, I was told that the Governor and Chief Secretary would be returning by air to Mandalay from Calcutta to set up Government at Maymyo, and that we should make our way there. It seemed a most idiotic thing to do, for the Jap objective was to

cut the Burma road and Maymyo was sitting pretty on it. The main Jap force had already struck north towards Toungoo on its way to Mandalay. We left Prome immediately and sped towards Yenanchaung, the oil town, via Magwe where we were subjected to aerial attacks. The oil town had been spared by the Jap Air Force but we made up for it by setting the oil tanks on fire. We made it to Mandalay by nightfall after one breakdown on the road, during which we had a brief encounter with Burmese dacoits.

The airport was at Mandalay; half its population had fled and the rest was swarming at the riverside waiting for steam-boats to take them north on the Irrawaddy. We drove through this old capital of the Kings of Burma glad to leave the sweltering plains behind and soon arrived at Maymyo with its mild sun, spring flowers and strawberries. It was bustling with the new life that had cropped up with the increased traffic on the Burma road; the old residents had left for safer places in the hilly countryside. We had a few days to wait for the British Governor to arrive, and when he did he realized there was nothing left to govern except the town of Maymyo. The Japs had been advancing relentlessly; Toungoo was taken by them on 24 March and Prome on 28 March. Mandalay suffered a severe bombing on 3 April and was transformed into a blazing inferno.

It was at this crucial moment that a conference of the Allies was convened at Kunming and I was asked to accompany a senior British civilian P.C. Fogarty to the meeting. He went by air and I by road with an army convoy. He died in an aircrash on the return journey. The conference was attended by Chou-en-Lai, Chiang Kai Shek and Generals Stillwell, Alexander and Chennault, among others. They realized that Burma could not be saved and decided to build a new road to China from Ledo in India, and also to use the air route known as "the hump" from Calcutta to Kunming for military and other supplies. On my way back I found Japanese advance patrols active on sections of the Burma road near Lashio. The road was eventually cut by the Japanese towards the end of April 1942. The Chinese army then retreated to China, and Stillwell and Alexander fled to the safety of India. We in Maymyo prepared for the long march to the Indian border. My role as a last ditcher had come to an end and I was free to find my way home.

The Trek to India

I formed a small group and decided to break away from the main body to make better time. We left Maymyo in an army truck on 24 April and passed through Mandalay, which was a picture of utter desolation with smouldering fires and not a soul in sight, except stray dogs and Chinese soldiers looking quite lost. Amarapura was our first halt where we waited for three days hoping to catch a train that never came.

While there, we received a call for help and rushed in our truck to investigate. Hundreds of Indian evacuees were camping on the banks of a lake and smallpox was rampant among them. And beside the lake was a convent from where the call for help had come. The nuns had taken vows to remain at their posts and were ministering to those with smallpox. They were badly in need of medicines, food, provisions, general stores, etc. I took a nun with me back to the town where I "requisitioned" their requirements from abandoned shops and took them to the convent. The Mother Superior was grateful and gave me three small medallions of saints and asked me to keep them for my safe passage to India. I still have them. I do not know what role they played in my protection, but there were occasions when many around me perished during Jap air attacks, and I was spared.

We decided to give up waiting for the train when we heard that the railway line had been bombed, and to try our luck on the river. The Ava bridge had already been packed with our explosives ready for blowing up and no train could go over it safely. Luck was with us, for a steam-boat "Mintha" was about to proceed north. We talked our way into it, overcrowded as it was with refugees. The Japs were close behind and if they wished, they could soon overtake the boat which was making slow headway between sandbanks and against the current.

At the first halt at Kyaukmyaung on the morning of 30 April I disembarked with my group and took a country boat across the Irrawaddy to the opposite bank. There we hired two bullock carts and struck out westwards through friendly villages where we bought hot meals. The people in the interior had nowhere else to run and had begun to settle down and wait for the Japs. Among them were Burmese officials who had left their homes for fear of air attacks. Very few Burmese evacuated to India.

Our chief problem was to find a safe place to sleep at nights. In the jungles there was danger from dacoits, and in the villages from other criminal elements. We were armed and solved our sleeping problem by keeping awake in turns. As we got closer to Chindwin river, we heard

increased Jap air activity. When we reached the river at Ye-u on 5 May, we realized we had to make faster progress towards India lest we should be overtaken by the monsoon or the Japs. We dispensed with our carts and hired a country-boat for the arduous trip up the river to Kalewa. The river was in spate, the currents were strong and erratic, and the western shore was infested with dacoits. And so we stuck to the eastern bank rowing up the river when we could and pulling the boat where the current was strong. It was hard going for city dwellers on half rations. Now and then Jap aircraft would come out of the blue and spray us with bullets, and we would scurry for shelter. Once while in midstream the air attack took place and sank two of the boats, but we had a miraculous escape. It was becoming obvious that at the rate we were going we could not remain ahead of the Japs or the monsoon.

Once again a bit of luck came our way. We spotted ahead of us an overloaded steamer berthed for the night and we made straight for it, as it was probably the last one going up the Chindwin. Sentries were mounted on it to prevent further loading. The captain was drunk and in a foul mood. Money changed hands and the Chittagonian crew smuggled us aboard in the stillness of one night at 3 a.m. We remained below deck till we reached Kalewa on 9 May in the evening, and scrambled ashore to meet the British Deputy Commissioner Atkinson. He strongly advised us to leave immediately and get lost in the low-lying hills during the night, for the Japs were expected any moment. He was himself due to leave at once and had stayed back only to meet the last boat. We took off for the hills the same evening, rested for the night and by next evening we were in the Kabaw valley. Ahead of us one hundred miles away was the Indian frontier at Tamu, and we had only our two legs to take us there.

There was in our group a forester Jimmy, who knew where to site our camps at night, how to build fires, where to find water, how to cook, etc. But for him we would have perished in the jungle, for we had used up all our tinned foodstuffs and were obliged to live off the country. Trekking had to be restricted to the early hours of the mornings and late in the evenings so as to avoid meeting Jap patrols. Three members of our group were in their late thirties and their feet had become swollen and painful. They slowed us down considerably and we had to be extra careful in keeping clear of Jap patrols. It was lucky for us that a truck came from the Indian side with four woodcutters, who were really our soldiers in disguise probing the extent of the Jap advance. They went back with three of our group in the truck together with information provided by us. Jimmy and I were left to trek on alone.

The very next morning we were overtaken by a Jap cycle patrol of six soldiers, who ordered us back to the nearest Jap headquarters and surrender ourselves. We explained that we were civilians on our way to India to join our families who had preceded us. Since we were apparently holding up their patrolling, one Jap soldier stayed behind to watch over us, while the rest went forward. When they returned, they said they would take us to their lines as prisoners. It was not a cheering prospect. After a day and night of detention we heard the next morning a powerful roar in the distance which became vibrant and deafening as it approached us. It was a squadron of American Flying Fortresses on their way to a target not far away. Within a few minutes we heard explosions of bombs followed by yet another series of explosions in response — the target was the Jap ammunitions base at Indainggyi. The Jap soldier guarding us became nervous, got on to his cycle and pedalled away to look for his comrades, and we quickly melted into the depths of the jungle. It had been a close call.

We avoided the beaten tracks and used only jungle paths thereafter to move in the general direction of the Indian border, and Jimmy was a superb path-finder. For in another three days we came across an Indian picket and were challenged. We told our story and were given steaming cups of tea and bars of chocolate, followed later by rotis, dal and curry. The next day, 16 May, we went to Tamu, rested and then took the route over the hills to Palel. It was a good route but with difficult climbs, and the camps had bunks for sleeping and tinned foodstuffs and drinks.

One day as we were climbing slowly, we saw on the hillside a tall Naga tribesman in colourful regalia with feathers, bows and arrows. He stood like a statue and watched us unblinkingly, as Jimmy and I exchanged comments as to whether we had strayed into head-hunting country. After studying us for some time the Naga uttered these unforgettable words in good English: "Do not be afraid. You are not going to lose your heads. If you are lost, follow me and I will show you the way." He then turned around and strode up the hill whistling the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. His village was at the top of the hill, where we were given food and drink and shown the way to Palel.

We got there on 20 May, a few days ahead of the monsoon, which effectively suspended Jap activities for some months. We rested for a day and night till we found places for us in an army truck bound in slow stages for Dimapur via Imphal, Mao and Kohima where we halted at night. The Planters Wives' Association looked after us at Dimapur for a couple of days during which we had our medical tests. I had lost 20

lbs. on the trek! A long train journey then took us from Dimapur to Calcutta where we arrived at the end of May 1942. I went to Writers' Building to meet Col. Ewing, the Burma Government's Representative, filled up some forms for an Army Commission, and in return was served with a written demand from the Home Secretary as to why I had granted without due authorization visas for India to some 30 Jewish refugees! I was too mad to reply to this absurd charge and took the train to my village to rest and recover.

Sojourn in Simla

Within a week of my getting home, I received a telegram from Chief Secretary Payton asking me to report for duty at Simla where the Burma Governor had set up a Government in exile. While at Calcutta I had applied for a Commission and Col. Ewing had thought that I would be commissioned and sent straight back to the Burma front! I needed and felt I deserved a change of scene, and so decided to accept the call to duty at Simla, which my father said would be like "a tea tray in the sky"!

And so indeed it was. It was ideal for recuperation with its mild climate in June, its lovely walks in the woods and its far-from-the-war atmosphere. Chief Secretary Payton wanted me to be with him at headquarters and to help with gathering information about the situation inside Burma from our own sources, which had yet to be developed. In the early days of settling down to work in Simla we were a small band of expatriates led by a British team lacking in motivation or drive. Only two senior Burmese officials had evacuated to India, not by choice but by force of circumstances. They were Tin Tut and Kyaw Min, the former with quite a brilliant intellect but rather dour and reticent, and the latter somewhat facile, gregarious and irrepressible. The Brits were mostly unhappy at being side-lined in Simla, while their colleagues were engaged in active war effort. The British Governor, Reginald Dorman Smith, was seldom to be seen at his office and rumour had it that he was drinking himself out of his job. There was in fact nothing much to do except mope.

I had my own share of brooding about the events that brought me to Simla. It is difficult to recapture the mood of those times. Simla was crowded with a wide variety of gallant uniforms worn by mainly white men and women, who had been rewarded with short spells of leave from the front in the Middle East or Burma. The restaurants were full

by day and the dance halls by night, and the overall atmosphere was light and gay. The war seemed unreal and distant, as if it were being fought in another planet.

To us from Burma, however, the war was within us. We had not, like others in Simla, been through brief spells of violent actions against the enemy. We had been subjected to a prolonged nightmare for over six months from December to the following June. We had not been armed as a group to resist the enemy. We had been on the run from the Japanese, from dacoits and from the advancing monsoon, having abandoned our homes, lost our relations and friends, not knowing where our next meal would come from, and where we would rest our heads at night. We had been bombed, machine-gunned and chased, and every one of us had suffered some personal grievous loss, or was still waiting for news of friends and colleagues who had not yet come out. Uncertainty gripped our hearts and minds, and the abnormal calm in India served to exaggerate our isolation. For a long time the midday siren was mistaken for an air-raid warning and drove us in a reflex reaction to get under the nearest tables for shelter!

I was mad with the British conduct of affairs in Burma during the Japanese advance, the disgraceful manner in which the much-vaunted British army was routed, and above all the shameful abandonment of the Burmese people. The Japanese had so easily exposed British weaknesses that I felt that the British would never again be allowed to rule over Burma. The vast majority of the Burmese people preferred to stay put in their villages and towns and cope as best as they could with the Japanese occupation, despite British exhortations to evacuate to India. In these circumstances, the scorched earth policy implemented by the British deprived the Burmese population of essentials like water, electricity, food supplies, etc., while denying precious little to the enemy.

I had witnessed the conquest of Burma in some four months by a ruthless foreign power, which had already bombed Calcutta and Vizagapatam, and was now poised on the land border to attack India. I wondered whether the British would be able to defend India if the Japanese were to launch a combined invasion from the sea and over land. It was fortunate for us that they did not do so in 1942. Evidently, they had over-extended themselves and were not ready for the Indian adventure. Subhas Chandra Bose was not yet in a position to lead the Jap forces into India, as Aung San had led them into Burma. What used to shock me was the general ignorance and complacency of the Indian people about the imminence of the Japanese threat, and the absence

of preparations to meet it. The British assessment then, I was told, was that the Japanese would press on through Burma northward into China in 1942, and would defer the invasion of India until the following year by when the British and Indian armies would be ready to defend.

Our Burma group slowly got down to planning the reconstruction of war-devastated Burma after driving out the Japanese forces. It was an extraordinary academic exercise based on inadequate information that was unverifiable and on assumptions that were highly questionable. Nevertheless, it was stimulating because no two persons were in agreement and much paper was used up in argument and counter-argument. No one took us seriously, least of all the Government of India whose guests we were! 1942 passed quietly in this dilettantish manner, and the following year we decided wisely to abandon planning and devote our energies to the compilation of information and gathering of intelligence. I made a few trips to the border to meet Burmese agents, one of whom, Thein Pe, I brought to Simla for briefing. He had gone underground and was operating against the Japanese occupation. On his advice we para-dropped six agents in Burma but only one of them survived. We gave up this method of planting agents in hostile terrain, and instead developed contacts within Burma by bringing them across to the Indian border and sending them back with equipment and arms. This proved to be useful later to the Chindit operations of General Wingate, who had come to Simla to meet us. His long-range penetration forces were to operate in areas through which many of us had trekked out of Burma, and our experiences were of interest to him.

I was a member of a Special cell for Burma intelligence work, which I shall call as Force XYZ. My Colonel's pseudonym was Columbine, and inevitably I was given the nom de plume of Major Harlequin! Our performance however was far from that of a French pantomime. Many interesting bits of intelligence came our way and some were quite bizarre, and my assessment and views used to be sought from time to time. On one such fateful occasion Columbine threw a slim file towards me and asked me for my views. It contained just two lists of names, one of Burmese and the other of Indians to be shot on sight during the retaking of Burma. Aung San headed the Burmese list and Subhas Chandra Bose was at the top of the Indian list. I was astonished at the crass stupidity of those who had compiled the list, and I set out all the reasons why it would be a political blunder of the first magnitude to do away with popular nationalist leaders of such eminence, who could be of inestimable value during the post-war years of pacification. Columbine apparently needed no convincing, but he wanted me to accompany

him when he called on Mountbatten, who had taken over the South East Asia Command. I think it was towards the end of 1943 that we met the Chief. He went through the lists, listened to us in silence, leaned forward to pick up a red and blue pencil and crossing out the names, said, "I don't want any such lists to be made again."

Return to Burma

By the middle of 1944 our plans were ready for taking over areas that may be cleared of the Japanese and reintroducing British military administration in Burma by civilian officials with military ranks. The military situation was favourable for the Allies both in Europe and the Far East where Japanese-held positions were coming under increasing pressure. There were different views about the strategy for the recapture of Burma, and larger issues and considerations came into play. The American priority was for the reconquest of northern Burma so as to be able to provide assistance to China. On the contrary, Churchill considered the south of Burma as far more valuable than the north, and his plan was to contain the Japanese forces in Burma by taking the great arc of islands forming today's Indonesia using amphibious power. Our own group in Simla, however, favoured the modest course of giving battle to the Japanese army on the Indian border and pushing towards central Burma and then southwards, while leaving it to the Americans to take northern Burma.

In the end, the Japanese main attack developed towards Imphal, Kohima and Dimapur, and it forced us to throw all our resources into the massive effort to halt them and drive them back. For three months the situation remained critical. The Japs cut the road to Dimapur and advanced up to Kohima, and our forces had to withdraw to the Imphal plateau, where they were surrounded by the enemy and had to be supplied by air. Churchill regarded it as the battle for India and his orders to Mountbatten were that "nothing should be spared for victory and he would not accept excuses from any quarter". For his part, Churchill ensured that there were enough aircraft for delivering supplies to our encircled army, even at the expense of delaying the outcome of ongoing battles in the Mediterranean area and elsewhere. Victory came at the end of June 1944 when Mountbatten reported, "The Japanese bid for India was over, and ahead lay the prospect of victory in Burma."

Thereafter the retaking of Burma was steady but slow, as the

monsoon restricted movement and Japanese resistance was stubborn. The decisive battle across the Irrawaddy began in February 1945, and Mandalay was entered on 9 March. The capital city of Rangoon was taken on 2 May without a fight, as the Japanese garrison had departed a few days earlier. Burma's liberation came after three years of Japanese occupation, during which Burma had been granted "independence" as demanded by Aung San and his colleagues. The nature of independence was a sort of local self-government, which left the Japanese free to pursue their war policy. It meant of course a considerable burden on Burma's resources, and within a year or so relations between the Burmese and the Japanese became strained. Also, the tides of war had turned in favour of the Allies and Burmese nationalists responded positively to overtures from us for information of military value. In return we air-dropped supplies and arms for them, which they put to good use against the Japanese in retreat, and also cached them safely for use against the British later, if necessary!

The re-establishment of British administration in the liberated areas went according to plan. Initially, it was a military administration under the command of Major General Hubert Rance, who had under him trained civilian officials including those who had evacuated to India and those who had stayed back and chosen to rejoin. The latter category was screened first to ensure that they had not collaborated with the Japanese army. There were very few cases of such collaboration. Most Burmese had either remained at their old civilian jobs during the occupation, or gone on leave, and they were influenced to do so by British broadcasts from India advising them that the occupation period would be treated as leave with pay, provided they did not collaborate with the Japanese. The military phase of administration lasted not more than a year, and its main tasks were to carry out repairs to essential communications and installations and to establish order in disturbed areas, which it did without much difficulty.

The chief problem facing the return of civilian administration was the manner and the extent of associating political parties with it. It could not be delayed, as politicians had tasted the fruits of "independence" under the Japs and were now demanding quick transfer of power after a minimum period of direct British rule. Besides, they were aware that India was negotiating for full independence and they would settle for no less; Aung San had been in touch with Jawaharlal Nehru and knew the score. As if to drive the point home, Aung San called for a general strike which in seven days brought everything to a standstill. And varying the pattern, he staged a successful rebellion in a part of

the country where he had his arms caches. British military prestige having been restored by victory over Japan, the Brits in Burma had no stomach for fighting the Burmese and hanging on to political control. Concessions were forthcoming and a provisional Government, a coalition of nationalist forces, was formed with Aung San as the Prime Minister, who immediately began negotiations for transfer of full power.

Unfortunately, he was assassinated with his entire cabinet on 20 July 1947. Some men with sten guns forced their way into a cabinet meeting and shot down all the ministers. The sense of deep shock and the feeling of total helplessness among the Burmese people was palpable and pervasive. Aung San's popularity was at its peak and he had no political rivals. And so there arose suspicions that perhaps the British had engineered the assassination with a view to delaying Burma's independence! This was totally baseless and had to be scotched at once. The British Governor quickly called on U Nu to form the Government so as to avoid any interregnum, and he reluctantly accepted the awesome responsibility. I was then in the Ministry of Home affairs. The Home Minister Kyaw Nyein and the Foreign Minister Tin Tut were away in London discussing questions regarding the transfer of power, and thus escaped. They returned immediately in a British Flying boat and it fell to me to meet them on landing in the river and take them to the Governor's residence. Their first question to me was: Who was responsible for the assassination? At that time we hadn't a clue. It was clear though that it had to be a Burmese politician, and since no one politician or party appeared more likely than others, everyone was under a cloud.

The climate could not have been more unhealthy, and in Government circles involved in the investigation the more sensitive tasks by common consent fell to Indian and British officials. Not long afterwards there was a breakthrough. Henry Khan, a Pathan officer whose house was on Kokine lake, reported having observed through his binoculars a great deal of comings and goings in a neighbouring house owned by a discredited old-time politician U Saw. He also noted the return of a jeep with Burmese men in uniform armed with sten guns an hour or so after the assassination. The house was surrounded and after a brief exchange of fire, in which Henry was killed, the assassins were taken. U Saw's involvement was exposed and he was tried and hanged. It was a bizarre crime committed by a failed politician with psychopathic tendencies, whose motives were unclear.

2.

INDIAN EMBASSY IN RANGOON

Independence for Burma was scheduled to take place at 4 a.m. on 4 January 1948. I had moved over to the Foreign Ministry under Tin Tut, who tried in vain to persuade me to opt for Burmese citizenship offering me double promotion.

I chose to retain my nationality, for I had met my wife in Simla and married her. She was to change my life, my attitudes and my politics. India too was on the way to independence and, at my wife's suggestion, I applied to the Federal Public Service Commission of India for recruitment to the IFS or IAS in the category of those under 30. I was examined by the FPSC on 29 January 1948 in New Delhi, the day before the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The Chairman of the Board was S.K. Kirpalani, and after the preliminaries he questioned me closely and at length about the likely outcome of the civil war in China. It turned out to be an inconclusive debate between the two of us, he favouring the thesis that Chiang Kai Shek would win because of US assistance, and I putting forward the view that American aid was going into Chinese pockets and Soviet support for Mao Tse Tung would help the better organized and motivated communists win power in two or three years. I had of course the advantage of having served in Burma on the road to China and also with Kuomintang troops in Burma. Kirpalani ended the argument by taking a bet of ten dollars that I was wrong in my assessment! However, the FPSC recommended me for appointment to the Foreign Service of India, and the Government of India posted me as Second Secretary and later as First Secretary to the Indian Embassy in Rangoon.

I knew Burma and the Burmese language, and I was known to the Burma Government and the leaders of the various political parties. My job included political liaison and protection of Indian nationals. The Head of our Mission was M.A. Rauf, a Barrister and a former Judge in one of the courts in Rangoon. Diplomacy was quite new to me and so indeed it was to everyone in the Embassy. None of us had been

trained in diplomacy and we all had to learn on the job the hard way through work experience. Rauf was doing it himself and he was good enough to pass on to me biographies of statesmen and diplomats of other countries, as well as books on international law and relations. He had excellent personal contacts at high levels with politicians, lawyers and judges, and his style of work was to delegate most of it to his officers, while reserving to himself only tasks that called for access to the political leadership. This enabled him to have a good deal of time for outside activities which yielded valuable information about many matters of interest to India, including the internal situation, relations between the factions constituting the Government, the interests of foreign countries such as the USA, China and Pakistan in Burma, etc. Rauf came to office late and left early, was a member of several clubs which he visited daily to play bridge and billiards, was fond of browsing in old book shops, and always left word where to get hold of him at any given time. At his morning prayer meetings he was full of information that had come to him which he wanted us to check out discreetly. He had a weakness for telling anecdotes and shaggy dog stories at which he invariably out-laughed everyone else.

At the official level we were led by Yezdi Gundevia with the reputation of being a mad hatter and an irrepressible comedian and mimic. He had a razor-sharp mind and was a marvellous raconteur which made him the life and soul of our parties. He was forever bubbling with life like good champagne and if he came across a sad face, he would open its mouth and tilt into it half a dozen small white pills from one of the several phials he carried – he was a self-taught homeopath – and spared no one, not even the President or Prime Minister of Burma. His repartee was quick and quite unpredictable. Ambassador Rauf had just returned from a visit to India with a coveted memento, a photograph of him grinning from ear to ear with Prime Minister Nehru and President Rajendra Prasad on either side of him, both down in the mouth and unsmiling. Rauf who was rather proud of this photographic coup passed it round and asked us what we thought of it. Gundevia took one look at it and commented, "Looks as if you had been telling them one of your jokes!" Rauf had a hearty laugh over it and used to repeat it thereafter to all who were shown the famous photograph.

The presentation of Rauf's credentials was not without its lighter moments. The Ambassador was the first to arrive in solitary and solemn splendour with a Burmese Chief of Protocol. The rest of us followed like a gaggle of geese in black sherwanis and white churidar pyjamas. The Burmese Military Secretary, an Australian leftover from British

rule, received us with consternation (he had not seen the Ambassador arrive) and muttered to Gundevia that he had forgotten his trousers. Gundevia remarked that all of us could not have been struck down with the same amnesia, and reassured him "pyjamas are our formal wear and on informal occasions we take them off!" We then marched up to join the Ambassador who was chit-chatting with the President and the Foreign Minister. We were informed by the latter that there would be two other credentials presentation after ours and we should adhere to the allotted time. As we were about to move into the ceremonial room, the Ambassador whispered to Gundevia that he had left his credentials at home! Gundevia took the Australian Military Secretary aside and asked him to produce a large envelope, which he handed over to Rauf for presentation. He then phoned Rauf's house to send the credentials at once by car. The ceremony proceeded without delay or hitch, and before we left the credentials had quietly replaced the blank envelope. The Burmese side was none the wiser for it, but the poor Australian was more than ordinarily confused by Indian diplomatic devilries. For all his pranks, Gundevia was a shrewd negotiator and drove a hard bargain in his own inimitable manner, for he said he should be worthy of his Parsi ancestry. The Burmese knew he was fair-minded and reasonable, and always gave in to him at the end before he implemented his threat of speaking in their language – his imitation of it was better than the original but it made no sense! Gundevia left the Embassy a few months after Burma became independent and returned to the Ministry of External Affairs, where he was a tower of strength for us in Rangoon.

Civil War

During my term in the Rangoon Embassy I was mainly occupied with problems arising from the rebellion that broke out shortly after Burma's independence. Like Aung San, his successor U Nu headed a coalition government made up of various political parties that had once been members of the national front that won freedom from British rule. Differences over their representation in the government and over U Nu's policies led to the break-up of the coalition in April 1948, and the break-away parties led by the Communist Party set up rival authorities in their respective strongholds, where they had their own secret dumps of arms and ammunition. In a few months the writ of the U Nu Government appeared to run only in Rangoon, and the situation

was made worse early in 1949 by the different ethnic groups – Karens, Kachins, Chins and Shans – losing confidence in the Government and setting up their own administrations in their areas. The communists added to the confusion by similarly establishing their regimes, red flags in the delta districts and the white flags in the north with a corridor to China. At one time the Kachins and Chins wanted to break away and join India, and I received a formal request from the Chins addressed to Prime Minister Nehru. Such soundings were firmly discouraged by us and I visited the hill areas for this purpose.

We were supplying arms to the Burmese Government and so was Pakistan and the UK, to deal with the rebellion, but there was little evidence of any determined assaults on rebel positions or of pitched battles. Avoiding active hostilities became a fine art practised by all parties including the Government, and the established ritual was to withdraw without a fight in the face of a superior force. Positions consequently changed hands from time to time and the situation was fluid. Our arms also changed hands for a price and the Burma Government was unable to do anything about thefts and desertions. It was an unreal sort of situation, but all parties to the rebellion including the Government were happy as long as each party had its own area to govern. Indian nationals were living in scattered groups in several parts of Burma that had come under rebel rule. They were mostly farmers and small traders and the insurrection had put them out of their livelihood, and they were in fact destitute. I was made responsible for their evacuation to India.

The first thing to do was to assess the magnitude of the problem and in this the help of All Burma Indian Congress Committee was invaluable. It sent its scouts to locate the areas and assess the extent of Indian concentrations in the districts, and we found that there were some 200,000 persons who would need to be evacuated. I then identified for each group some central points at which to foregather, from which they could be got out to Rangoon by rail, river or air. Accommodation in camps was arranged for them in Rangoon prior to their onward movement to Madras or Calcutta by steamers chartered from India by the Government. The camps in Rangoon could accommodate no more than 5000 persons and the harbour could handle only one steamer at a time. The success of this operation called Endgame required strict observance of exact timings of various movements by river boat, railway, aircraft and steamer, for the refugees had to embark for India within 24 hours of arrival in Rangoon. The Burma Government was persuaded to meet the cost of evacuation by river boat and train. I had

to find aircraft for moving them by air within Burma. I chartered the aircraft from the Union of Burma Airways and sublet it to merchants wanting to fly out goods and provisions upcountry where they were in short supply, and on the return flights it would bring in the refugees at no cost.

The most crucial task was to ensure the safety of the evacuating refugees. For this purpose I made several trips to areas of conflict to meet rebel leaders to arrange temporary ceasefires on pre-fixed dates and times, and to have our people escorted by Congress volunteers or my Assistants, who had to be in touch with local commanders of forces. The gift most appreciated by these commanders was a bottle of Scotch, which one of them claimed was an excellent disinfectant! In retrospect I am surprised that the operation proceeded so smoothly over a period of several months, but during those anxious days all of us kept our fingers crossed. Actually, everybody cooperated and this applied to the warring parties, the voluntary organizations, the social workers and also Burma Government and our own officials, including Mahboob Ahmed, K.R. Narayanan and Onkar Deva. For the success of the operation I earned a reprimand from our Finance Ministry, which called for an explanation as to why I had initially asked for such a large appropriation and only spent so little of it! I requested Gundevia to provide the explanation, which I am sure he must have enjoyed doing, for I heard no more from Finance.

During this operation I was able to renew my contacts with Burmese rebel leaders who had been in college with me. One of them used to copy my maths. notes, another borrowed my tennis racket and the third enjoyed thrashing me in chess. I got to know quite a lot about the conditions under which they fought and pursued their various political aims. I came across a few problems which I was able to resolve with their cooperation and goodwill, such as securing the release of P.K.Kapila, an administrator, from trial by a People's court, saving Dr. R.D.Pal of Toungoo for having attended on some wounded soldiers belonging to the wrong rebel group, and obtaining the release of two dozen Indian trucks requisitioned by a Karen rebel group in Taunggyi.

An unlikely venture was to intercede on behalf of the British Embassy, as the British had been forbidden by the Burma Government from entering rebel-held areas, to seek the release of D.C.P. Phelps, Honorary British Consul, who had been abducted at Yenangyaung by a local rebel group, the PVO (People's Volunteer Organization). Naturally, I did not use the name of the British Embassy, for had I done

so things might have gone differently, as the rebel leader, very much my senior in the University, was a bull frog of a man with pronounced anti-British feelings. My "intercession" assumed the colouration of giving personal advice to the rebel leader. I said I had known Phelps when he served the British Burma Government, he had now retired and was living in Burma because he was fond of it, and I could not think of any other such crazy Britisher. To abduct him and give no reason was giving him and his party a bad name in diplomatic circles. The Burma Government, which had until then been inactive, was being pressured to take action, which they might well have to do. Nothing was gained by keeping Phelps, and his release might possibly avert hostilities. On the following morning the rebel leader told me that Phelps had been taken to the "border" and put on a bus bound for Rangoon, and that he had been abducted by some young bloods for no apparent reason. Such were the conditions in the happy-go-lucky land of the PVO.

Communist Administration

I spent some time in the areas under the occupation of better organized communist rebels. Each village was administered by a council of 5 persons, the PAC (Peoples' Administrative Council). They were not elected but nominated by the Secretary of the Party of that township, known as the Administrator, who was virtually a dictator. Four or five villages or village tracts came under one Administrator, whose duty was to give propaganda lectures and supervise the administration of the villages under him according to party lines. Above him were the Township Admin. Council, Subdivisional Admin. Council and District Admin. Council. These were similarly constituted and were subordinate to Zone Commanders who were invariably members of the Party's Politbureau. The PAC, apart from its responsibilities for administration and agriculture, was also the War Council charged with defence and collection of intelligence.

Every PAC had a judicial department which tried all offences brought to its notice. Its decisions were subject to confirmation by the PAC. Punishments were crude and cruel. For example, a drunkard had to walk around with a placard saying he would not drink again. A convicted thief had his hands chopped off, and one who raped a woman was hanged on the nearest tree and left there for days. Servants of employers settled old scores with false complaints, and persons belong-

ing to the upper classes were singled out for punishment even for the most insignificant of complaints. "Enemies" of the Party were tried by Peoples' Courts, where the charges would be read out and the mob then asked whether the accused was guilty and what the punishment should be. The answer was invariably that the accused should be shot and often he was shot on the spot!

There was no established form of revenue collection. Each household was required to prepare food parcels for communist forces camped in the village. Party members worked on an honorary basis but were housed, fed and clothed at the expense of the villagers. Land and abandoned properties were taken over by the Party. Workers had to form unions and their heads were roped into Party membership. Trade was on a barter basis and transporters of commodities had to pay some form of toll. There were schools in every village and the teachers were Party propagandists. Prisoners had to attend indoctrination classes. Admission to the Party was voluntary, and after indoctrination a person was required to sign an oath of allegiance to the Party.

Apart from the levies of the Communist army, there were several other levies. Every village raised its own levies for a variety of duties including keeping watch. They were not issued with firearms, and they had to bring their own weapons, such as swords, spears, etc. The actual fire-power of the Communist Party was unknown, but it was reported that there were Bren guns, rifles, carbines, machine guns, mortars and grenades in their arsenal. I was told that these ideas for administration were taken from Mao Tse Tung's writings.

In the course of my trips to evacuate our nationals in distress I had occasion to travel to the far north in 1950 and I came across evidence of Chinese army patrols having passed westwards. There was a pattern in their movements and in the questions they put to local tribes, who formed the impression they were probed about the extent of Burmese administration, and the location of China's boundary with Burma and India. Fear of China dominated Burmese minds at that time, especially after the Burma Communist Party opened a corridor between its areas of occupation and the Chinese border in the east. However, the U Nu Government was less exercised by the potential danger of China's invasion of Burma and was willing to negotiate the settlement of its boundary. The American Embassy in Rangoon, having failed to get the Burma Government to agree to the use of Burmese territory by the nationalist Chinese troops of Chiang Kai Shek against communist Chinese forces, concentrated its diplomatic efforts in preventing Burma from becoming infected with Nehru's non-alignment. The

Soviet and Chinese Embassies were playing a watching game, keenly aware of the limitations of their influence or their pressure on Burmese communists. I was not aware of any section of Burmese political opinion that was inclined to lean on India for protection. In Burmese minds there were two images of India – one that provided coolies and sweepers for the streets of Rangoon, and the other of the ancient land of the Buddha.

My term in Burma came to an end in May 1951 after three years of service in our Embassy and we left on home leave and transfer. Leaving Burma was a big wrench for me knowing that I might never again return. Until then I had spent all my years in Burma, except for three years in Simla. Although there was no relation of mine in Burma, for they had all left when the Japanese attacked in 1942, I was taking away memories of places and persons and of growing up. Memories of the trek out of Burma have remained vivid. The following vignette of that eventful period will give some idea of the trials and torments encountered.

On the Trek – a Vignette

It was early May in 1942. We had just reached Kalewa after a long haul up the river Chindwin. There had been some two hundred persons with a scattering of wives and children when we left Maymyo at the end of April. That was three weeks ago – weeks crammed with enough trauma for a lifetime. Now there were only five of us, the others somewhere behind hopefully safe.

As we lay that night in the shelter of the empty government bungalow, sleep would not come. Though my limbs were tired, the mind was unnaturally alert as if sensing some imminent danger. It was overwhelmed by a spate of memories and resisted the approach of sleep.

George with the high-pitched voice, fussy and cantankerous, hung on grimly to his diminishing worldly possessions. He had been crawling along far behind the others dragging his things wearily after him, mile after mile. He was always the last to reach camp every evening, with his feet swollen and sore. He would sit down, sort out his stuff and discard a little every night, as he grew weaker. His papers seemed more important to him than his other things, and once a determined gust of wind snatched them all away, leaving him disconsolate. And we had

laughed uproariously and cruelly, for fate seemed to pick on him for her choicest caprices.

We had been towing our boat up the river for days and it was fiercely hot. The current was strong, our progress was dangerously slow and our nerves had reached breaking point. It had become imperative to conserve our tinned foodstuffs and rely on what we were lucky to find in deserted Burmese hamlets on the way. Eustace, with bulging blue eyes and a substantial paunch, was the hardest hit, for he had an appetite that defied all restraint. One night Eddy spotted him raiding the food cans and caught him red-handed with an open tin of peas. In the ensuing scuffle Eustace was pinned down to the ground by Eddy who held a dagger at his throat. Eddy was breathless and frothing at the mouth; there was murder in his yellow eyes.

The group law demanded Eustace's instant dismissal. In that hostile country he would not have survived more than a few hours. Hunger, thirst or dacoits would have laid him low. I, the dispenser of the law, shamefully tempted Eddy and George, the most vociferous accusers, with a half-consumed tin of peas and they settled for it in preference to the rigour of the law being applied against Eustace.

After a few days' journey from Kalewa we had tied our boat one night on a large sandbank, which was already occupied by others. One of them was a woman, strong and well-proportioned in her body. As she passed by us, the smell of her sweating body, the wind in her hair and the rhythm of her movement made her one with the soil, earthy and elemental, a medium for giving and nourishing life—the original woman in all her physical glory. But her face, as though in revolt against her body, was sexless. To look at it was to sense an instantaneous repression of the passions provoked by her body.

But Eddy had eyes only for her body. His eyes followed her every movement, steadily and quietly. He barely breathed as he watched her settle down in the sand not far away. In the distance the crickets began their pre-monsoon chorus. The air was heavy and a pi-dog set up a mournful howl in a monastery. And Eddy crawled in the night towards the woman. In silence they clutched and clawed and rolled in the sand locked together in a welter of passion and fear. A sharp yelp of pain woke me and I found Eddy doubled up from a savage kick in the groin, with the woman standing over him with a chopper. Values had tumbled in the general breakdown. The experience sobered Eddy and for days he went about in stupefied silence.

Jimmy had been the mainstay of our group, the father confessor and chief provider. Years ago he had been a trained forester and had

acquired an intimate knowledge of jungle lore. The first to get up in the morning, he would light a fire and prepare something for us to drink and eat before setting out on the day's trek. It was he who selected the place to camp at night, cleared the underbush, built a fire, brought in the water and cooked the dinner.

Once he had taken ill, grown weak and begged us to go ahead, saying he would follow when he felt better. The other three pushed on, and after a while at Jimmy's insistent urging I too left him. But I felt horribly uneasy. I had barely gone two hundred metres before I spotted in the jungle a couple of dacoits, and rushed back to find Jimmy settling down for the night beside a tree. I flourished my revolver, fired a warning shot at the dacoits and yanking Jimmy to his feet stumbled on half-carrying and half-dragging him. Soon we reached an abandoned village in which we found our companions and joined them for safety. I was appalled by how close I had been to deserting Jimmy.

How long would this parade of the past go on, I wondered lying awake. It was dark that night and all was strangely still. The crickets and the house lizards were quiet, and the howling of the pi-dogs stopped. I felt a small soft hand steal over my mouth and gently hold it tight. I could see that the hand belonged to the sturdy Gurkha woman, who had come earlier into the bungalow with her child and her rifle-carrying husband. In the quietness of understanding that comes to mortals in danger, she pressed into my hand two bullets and a kukri and dissolved quickly into the enveloping darkness.

What was her unspoken message? Obviously, she wanted desperately to get rid of the things she had given me. But why me, and what was I to do with them? I should have discarded them, but I was intrigued and lay awake wondering and peering into the shadows. Early next morning in the half light before the others awoke, we left to cross the hills into the Kabaw valley and follow the route to India.

Not far from Indainggyi the scent of Japs was in the air, and so we jettisoned our arms, shoes, khaki-wear and other such links with the military. Soon enough a Japanese cycle patrol stopped us for interrogation and search, and found on my person two bullets and a kukri. We were detained under the guard of one nervous Jap soldier with a bayonet, while the other Japs pressed forward on patrol.

The following morning brought unexpected relief. From a distance came a low deep throbbing sound, persistent and ever growing, and drawing nearer inexorably. Soon the air was filled with a deafening roar everywhere and all around. The earth trembled, the trees shivered and giant shadows swept over us again and again blotting out the sun and

the sky. And then came a succession of shocks and a thousand fragments of earth bounded upwards and outwards, leaping madly to the crashing cymbals of some subterranean fortissimo. American flying fortresses were laying their eggs on the Japanese ammunition depot at Indainggyi. As the fury subsided and the earth came back, we found that the Japanese guard had gone, and we were safe again.

Not long afterwards we reached the Indian border following jungle trails with Jimmy's unerring instinct. There in one of the camps I ran into the Gurkha woman and her husband. They were anxious to know if her gifts had brought me bad luck. When assured they had, she grieved and explained that her husband had been saving the last two bullets for her and the child, and the kukri for himself!

3.

TRINIDAD AND THE WEST INDIES

I have never been able to fathom why I was posted to Port of Spain, as the orders stated, without giving a clue as to what and where it was. I had not heard the name before, nor had my wife. We were on leave in Allahabad when we received this intimation, whose clerical brevity was the soul of an enigma. My father-in-law dug out an ancient atlas and located it as the capital of Trinidad, a British island off the coast of Venezuela. It seemed very far away and certainly far removed from a career in diplomacy, for the helpful atlas said that it was inhabited by armadillos, humming birds and frogs that whistled!

I went up to New Delhi to explore, enquire and seek a change of posting from the Head of Administration, Badruddin Tyabji. He gave me a good tea, spoke highly of my work in Burma, prophesied that I had a great future, confided that India had much at stake in Port of Spain, and told me to go to Trinidad, or else. And so I went. I had rather hoped that I might be kept at Headquarters for a few years but apparently there were then fewer posts at home than now. There was a vacant post in Trinidad, I was at a loose end, so I got sent there, and perhaps also because others had managed to avoid it. That is quite often the manner in which destiny operates and I accepted it with a measure of detachment not only as the voice of Tyabji but also the hand of a mysterious inflexible force.

The existence of this force was proved in later years when we had to fill a form naming three places in order of preference where we would like to be posted. My choices used to be put down every time as Australia, Belgium and Canada. Some perceptive infant genius in the Administration noticed this steadfast consistency in my choices and took the trouble to seek my reasons for them. My answer – the alphabetical order – did not amuse him, and I have never been posted to these three countries. Had I been posted to Headquarters, my wife could have resumed her career as a lecturer in Political Science. Giving up her own career in favour of mine has been a tremendous sacrifice,

as indeed it must be to other Foreign Service wives in similar situations without any worthwhile compensation. In our confidential reports wives are shown as assets to our career, but in fact they are much more, for they are unpaid assets to our country's representation.

Looking back, Trinidad was not such a bad posting at all. Before leaving for it, I read some of the recent reports from our Mission there and found them long-winded and quite indigestible. Evidently, my predecessor had taken the utmost care to ensure that the Ministry was informed of every single development in that remote part of the world. I was not surprised to learn from the Ministry that the reports were not read at all, and since copies of them were being sent also to our High Commission in London, I was told I would be briefed when I passed through London. P.N. Haksar was the Counsellor there in September 1951 and he gave me some useful tips and also information about current British colonial policy. Krishna Menon was then the High Commissioner and when I called on him, he looked Mephistophelean; part of the conversation went as follows:

KM: Where are you from?
RJ: From Burma; Sir.
KM: I meant which part of India.
RJ: From Tanjore in Madras State.
KM: Do I know anybody there that you know?
RJ: I doubt it, Sir. I don't know anybody there. I was only born there and brought up in Burma.
KM: Do you know U Ohn, the Burmese Ambassador?
RJ: Yes, Sir. He was several years my senior in college, and is quite close to Prime Minister U Nu.
KM: He is an arm-chair socialist, a Fabian. Are you one too?
RJ: No, Sir. About Trinidad, is there any advice you can give me, Sir?
KM: I can't be bothered advising you. See Haksar, he will brief you. By the way, I hear you are taking a revolver for the Indian Commissioner in Trinidad. See that he doesn't use it.
RJ: I will do my best, Sir.
KM: Come to my tea this evening.
RJ: Thank you, Sir. I shall come.
KM: Do you know anyone in Trinidad?
RJ: The Governor and the Commissioner of Police. I served with them in Burma.
KM: See that they don't influence you too much!

Little did I know then that this was a foretaste of many more exchanges with him in the years to come at the UN in New York.

Arriving in Port of Spain we found that we had travelled backwards in time to the early 1930s in Burma, the era of restricted suffrage, semi-representative institutions with limited functions and substantial reserve powers with the Governor. There was then not a single political party with even self-government as its objective. Sugar was dominant in the economy and labour unions were not even federated. Everything was England-oriented – culture, education, employment and economy; nationalism was concentrated in cricket. Our parish included Jamaica, Guyana and all the British islands in the Caribbean, and island-hopping was the generally accepted mode of relieving boredom. I had known the Governor Sir Hubert Rance in Burma and also the Commissioner of Police Col. Eric Beadon, who was Rangoon's Deputy Commissioner of Police. They were both glad to see me and were sure I would give them no trouble! In turn I expressed the confidence they would give me every help in my job. Both were old India hands and a few generations of their families had served and some died in India, and they were extremely sympathetic towards persons of Indian origin in Trinidad.

My main concern at the beginning was to establish a harmonious working relationship with the Indian Commissioner Anand Mohan Sahay, who had been one of the Ministers of the Government of Subhas Chandra Bose during the Japanese occupation of Burma, and who had become allergic to my predecessor. When I met Sahay he poured his heart out to me about the offhand manner of his treatment by regular Indian Foreign Service officers, and hoped he would have no cause for complaint against me. I had in my pocket a communication from New Delhi sent to Trinidad to await my arrival (which had missed me in London) cancelling my posting to Trinidad and ordering me to join our Embassy in Moscow! Apparently, Gundevia who was in Moscow had moved in the matter to get me to join him. I was keen to do so but my wife was against the idea of going to Moscow at the beginning of the winter, and besides we had had a very bad crossing from London and she could not face another in the reverse direction. I showed the communication to Sahay to test his reaction and said that our preference would be to give Trinidad a trial. He seemed relieved at our decision, and our working relations were sorted out with relative ease.

It was already nearing the end of the year 1951 and it was reporting time. I prepared a short monthly report of three pages and a shorter annual report of a page and a half in the form of political and economic

assessments set against the Latin American background. Previous reports had been newsy but devoid of analysis and opinion and run to 15 pages, if not more. Sahay was appalled at my severely curtailed treatment of reportage, more so because it cut out social and cultural events on which he was rather keen. However, I told him that the earlier reports had never been read and not even acknowledged, and that if he wanted higher levels to take note of them, he should give my idea a fair trial. And he did and he was ever so grateful, for the monthly report was read and commented on by the Foreign Secretary, and the annual report was appreciated by Prime Minister Nehru himself, who for the first time had read something about that part of the world and was moved to make a few remarks about its future. Sahay was thrilled and was generous enough to shed his jaundiced views of my Service. Life and work thereafter became easier and more interesting.

Our main official concern was the welfare and future of persons of Indian origin who constituted one-third of the population of Trinidad and one-half that of Guyana. They were direct descendants of Indians brought over a hundred years ago as indentured labourers for working in sugarcane plantations after the abolition of slavery, which had resulted in the mass exodus of Negro labour from the plantations to urban centres. The present Indian descendants had come a long way since then. The majority of them were living and working in towns as teachers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, etc., while the civil services and the police were predominantly staffed by Negroes. As I saw the situation concerning Indians, they had three main problems: (i) those still working as agricultural labour in the plantations needed to form unions and federate them so as to maximize their bargaining power vis-a-vis the private owners who were mostly British, (ii) those in the towns needed to make their presence felt politically, and (iii) generally speaking, Indians of the middle classes needed to integrate more with other communities.

It was not difficult to solve the first problem; all that Indian labour leaders needed was informed advice and some help in drafting the terms and conditions of a Federation of sugarcane labour unions, which I happily provided. They had their first trial of strength with the management and won their case, and one other important outcome was the election to the Legislative Council of two Indian labour leaders. The second problem I tackled indirectly by setting up Gandhi Study Circles and inviting Negro leaders to speak on the history of slavery and the movement to abolish it. I got to know Eric Williams quite well; he was my neighbour, and his daughter went to the same kindergarten

as mine. Williams was then Deputy Chairman of the Caribbean Commission, a historian of established reputation and a first-rate speaker. He was most reluctant to enter politics, as he was out of sympathy with all the parties in the field. And so I suggested that a new party be formed under his leadership with Negroes and Indians, a mixture of the new professionals and labour leaders, and I lent a hand in the drafting of its manifesto. The Party made its appearance soon afterwards as a new force and within three years (I had departed from the colony by then) it had won a few seats and entered the Legislative Council. Williams eventually became the Prime Minister, but I shall never forget how difficult it was in those early years to get him to take the plunge into politics. And once he had done so, there was no holding him back, and though he remained an intellectual and somewhat aloof he became a popular leader, because Trinidadians love public speaking and he was very good at it. In these activities of mine I took care to keep Governor Rance informed of them, and there was never any complaint of external interference in internal affairs.

The third problem of integration of the two different racial communities did not receive our attention in any practical sense. We had our hands full with keeping the various strands in the Indian community together and united—Hindus and Moslems, Arya Samajists and Sanatan Dharmis, and our haves and have-nots. The process of integration with Negroes cannot be forced; it is at best slow, unregulated and unpredictable due to the different origins. The emancipation of the Negro slaves in the Caribbean took place on 1 August 1838. Indian immigrant labour followed a year later at the request of the British planters and their lobbies in England. The first scheme of importation of indentured labour was abandoned because of the high rate of mortality. It was resumed in 1851 and the second scheme failed because sugar prices were low. The third phase stabilized in 1870 and was continued until 1922. John Gladstone, a Liverpool merchant and father of the famous Prime Minister, was responsible more than any one individual for conceiving and carrying out the Indian immigration scheme. At the Indian end Gillanders Arbuthnot & Co. of Calcutta undertook the selective recruitment of Indian "coolies", as they came to be known, and thus the Indian Representative acquired the sobriquet of "Cooly Commissioner".

The indenture was initially for five years with the option of returning to India thereafter, and in the beginning of the scheme's operation most immigrants opted to return home, as they could not withstand the rigorous living and working conditions in the plantations. The recruit-

ing areas were Gorakhpur, Oudh, Bihar, Chota Nagpur, Vizagapatam and Madras and the recruits were sent to Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and St. Kitts. Where Indian immigrants were small numerically, as in the smaller islands, there was integration with Negroes and the Indian identity was lost in two or three generations. In the larger colonies the situation was different. The planters preferred the hard-working Indian to the indolent Negro, and used every possible device, except decent wages and better living conditions, to retain Indian labour. The following extracts from the book *The Coolie* by Jenkins, published in 1871 by Virtue & Co. London, speak for themselves:

"The Negroes are inclined to selfishness, domineering, cheating and favouritism. They are prejudiced against the coolie as an interloper of another and physically weaker race. Their greed or their passion often leads them to perpetrate criminal acts. They need the firmest restraint and watchfulness by the plantation manager and staff."

"Oh! master, please help coolie. Manager too bad. He starve us, beat us, too hard work, too little food, too little money.

Go tell the Magistrate.

Oh, master. No good magistrate, he friend of Manager, go his house for breakfast. Magistrate always for Manager."

"As a rule the coolie will not marry or live with persons of a different race. He despises the Negro, because he considers him as a being not so highly civilized as himself; while the Negro in turn despises the coolie because he is so immensely inferior to him in physical strength. The proportion of the sexes among coolies was two to one in favour of the male and this was unfavourable to family life, fostered unsettled habits and tended to lower the standard of morality and of health. Among the indentured immigrants there were few married men, and the proportion of females was made up in the bazaars."

Plantation society was born and nurtured in violence. The old African and Indian manners and customs became meaningless in the plantation milieu. It was only after the immigration was stopped in 1922 that the character of the society gradually changed for the better under the impact of new ideas, such as self-determination and human rights, and of new immigrants who came of their own free will. In the post-war atmosphere of freedom there was inevitably the desire to re-discover

one's roots, and to re-assert one's identity and native traditions against the imposition of the culture of the ruling race, the English culture. But the movement to restore old patterns of behaviour proved in the main to be sketchy, artificial and short-lived. The process of re-interpretation and re-orientation was eventually subordinated to pressures for a new common identity in the light of progress towards political independence.

Culture is not the biological endowment of a race; it can be acquired by and imparted to another race. When more than two cultures are in contact, as in the West Indies, the process of borrowing from one another is accelerated on a selective basis. The borrowing is usually determined by those aspects that are of interest and benefit to the borrower. It may be speeded up by pressures applied in the economic, social and political spheres to force a change, and while this would increase receptivity to new ideas, it would at the same time create some resistance. In this fashion the negroid majority came to accept and Africanize English culture, which became modified as a consequence within the wider cultural milieus of the USA and Latin America. And it is this new culture of the Caribbean that the Indian community has had to accept and become a part of and make the necessary adjustments to its own culture, while retaining it at the same time less obtrusively.

The African cultural focus that has survived concerns intimate aspects, such as relations between men and women and between women and children. The practice of Christian religion through emotional responses in the African idiom of song and dance gives greater freedom to the Negro personality. These factors and elements impart a certain essential quality of unity and a degree of psychological harmony that make the Caribbean Negro feel he is a part of his own community. It is in the fields of music and dance that African forms have made their widest impact with greater emphasis on rhythm, repetitive melody, inspired improvisation and an amazing facility for verbal expression. The calypso, carnival and steel band are excellent outlets for release of frustrations, humour, satire and story-telling and indeed for hiding ugly realities.

Indian immigrants have maintained a good deal of the traditions they had brought with them, especially those affecting personal relations and the practice of their religion, though they have mostly lost their language. The Indian adjustment to the changing environment has not been easy. Under economic stress and the drive for prestige, adjustments have taken place based on competition. The rites of

marriage and death, the festivals, the institution of the family and the ties binding children to parents and husbands to wives have persisted, despite broken marriages and promiscuous living. They are aware of the dangers of cultural isolation or aloofness and are making adjustments that make possible the peaceful coexistence of the two cultures sharing a common political destiny. Like the Negroes, many Indians have migrated to the USA in recent years.

Guyana

The big event in my time was the constitutional crisis of 1953 in Guyana which was brought on by the frustrations, impatience and radicalism of the political party that won the elections and was required to implement the constitution it had opposed. The constitution in question had been recommended by a Royal Commission in response to popular demand, which had been the outcome of prolonged rule by a semi-representative government without any real power or responsibility. It had made tacticians of politicians rather than statesmen. The political stage was dominated by petty jealousies and personal rivalries, the conditions of Indian plantation labour had deteriorated, and internal squabbles had rendered the trade union movement ineffective. In keeping with reforms in the colonial neighbourhood, the Commission had proposed universal adult suffrage, a bicameral legislature and reserve powers for the British Governor to be exercised on occasions of grave public consequence in order to ensure that law and order and other essentials of good government were maintained. The Government, i.e., the Executive Council had 6 elected members as Ministers, 3 officials and 1 nominated member under the chairmanship of the Governor. The three officials were responsible for law and order, finance, defence, external affairs and information.

The Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) had fought and won the elections under the new constitutional dispensation. It was the creation of Chedi Jagan, an Indian dentist turned politician, with his roots in the sugarcane plantations, where he had gained a vast following by espousing the cause of disgruntled largely Indian labour. The PPP also attracted the allegiance of young radicals from the towns and the trade unions. Its main criticism of the constitution was that real power under it was vested in the Governor and the three officials and that elected ministers would not have the possibility to improve the conditions of the masses. One might have expected the PPP in these circumstances to boycott the elections. But evidently its strategy was to win the elections, try to implement its electoral promises of redressing grievances, and by failing to do so create a crisis situation in which the British would either have to yield to the demand for more powers, or suspend the constitution and revert to direct rule. Its electoral campaign promised liberation from the colonial rule, state control of education, health and housing, and nationalisation of industries including sugar. The elections held in April 1953 were won by the PPP with a majority of 18 seats in a House of 24. What was extraordinary about the elections was the total absence of appeal to racism, and both Negroes and Indians voted solidly for the PPP and all the 4 seats in the capital Georgetown were won by it.

There is little doubt that the resounding success at the polls went to the heads of the PPP leaders and they became obsessed by a sense of destiny. The six elected Ministers began to function as a parallel Executive Council on the principle of collective responsibility. Isolating the Governor and his officials, they presented a united front and a common demand by the majority for legislative action to implement the PPP programmes. The Governor was put in the position of delaying or withholding his consent to proposed legislation for financial or other reasons; the Bills had a pronounced leftist orientation. Within four months a confrontational situation developed between the Governor and the elected Ministers. The turning point was the labour strike on sugarcane plantations which was called on 30 August 1953. After 25 days the strike had to be called off, because the workers were in a bad way. But feelings were running high against the British and various inflammatory statements were made by the radicals. The administration lost confidence in the rank and file of the Police when it failed to control mobs before the House. The PPP leaders were unable to control the extremists who generated a great deal of mass hysteria by holding street corner meetings and demonstrations in Georgetown. The situation quickly assumed menacing proportions and it was apprehended that an attempt might be made to overthrow the Government. The Governor then asked for British troops to be sent and they arrived on 8 October 1953. The elected Ministers were dismissed and the administration passed into the hands of the Governor. The British Government suspended the constitution "to prevent communist subversion".

The clock had been turned back. The responsibility for it was placed on the PPP, whose methods were designed openly to liquidate British colonial rule and replace it legally by majority communist rule, like a

Bolshevik coup d'etat. That would have been intolerable to all sections of British political opinion, which was in favour of independence for colonies on the basis of constitutional advance broadening from precedent to precedent towards the final political goal. The British Labour Party, which had been sympathetic to the PPP at the beginning, later strongly denounced its policies and actions. Oliver Lyttleton, the Conservative Party Colonial Secretary, stated: "Having given the rider the reins, we are not absolved from responsibility for the horse." Reactions in other Caribbean colonies were generally critical of the PPP for having put communist ideology before everything else, and for not having wisely used the opportunities provided by the new constitution. They felt that the PPP had betrayed majority rule and broken faith with other colonial peoples struggling for freedom, and had been guilty of "political exhibitionism".

Sahay had left on transfer and I was asked by the Ministry of External Affairs to send a special report on the crisis in Guyana. I flew to Georgetown, met the two principal political personalities, Chedi Jagan and Lyndon Burnham, the British Governor Savage, Chief Secretary Gutch, and a number of Indian and Negro politicians and others. What was quite astonishing was that the arrival of a mere 200 British soldiers should have caused the over-heated crisis to subside so quickly. The PPP was in disarray and had developed internal dissensions; the radicals had isolated themselves, and the leadership was confused and without any plan of action. The Negro radicals in the towns blamed the Indian plantation labour for calling off the strike. It seemed to me that a cooling off period was eminently desirable for all parties, and the removal from the scene of the two central figures, Jagan and Burnham, would serve to calm the political atmosphere. The British Governor agreed and on my recommendation our Government invited them both to visit India and they gratefully accepted the opportunity to air their views abroad. My report on the crisis had the distinction of being mentioned in Parliament by Prime Minister Nehru, who had it printed and circulated.

4.

THE UN TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

India was elected to the Trusteeship Council in 1954 and was nominated to be a member of the UN Mission to inspect the same year three Trust Territories in East Africa, namely, Somalia, Tanzania and Ruanda-Urundi, which were administered by Italy, United Kingdom and Belgium respectively. The Ministry of External Affairs, I learnt later, had suggested a panel of three or four names from which to select a person to represent India, and Prime Minister Nehru had drawn a neat line crossing out the entire panel and minuted (for me) the historic order: "I think R. Jaipal might be sent to the Trusteeship Council." The Foreign Secretary S. Dutt told me later that everyone was taken by surprise, as at that time I was an unknown quantity and no more than a name on paper. His guess was that my report on Guyana was still fresh in the mind of Nehru, who had though that I might do for the job. Thus I moved to New York early in May 1954 from Trinidad and found myself suddenly pitchforked into the entirely unfamiliar ambience of United Nations.

The Head of our Mission there was Rajeshwar Dayal, who told me quite frankly that my job was new without any previous history. I would, therefore, have to be very much on my own but he would be always available for consultation. He was good enough to advice me on essential reading material, which I found to be of great benefit and value during my tenure. He passed on to me the advice given to him by the legendary B.N. Rau, his predecessor and earlier Judge of the Supreme Court of India, to the effect: "At the UN let your speech be soft but make your facts hard." Rau had successfully pursued this policy at the UN in his time and had acquired a Gandhian halo around his head caused partly also by the whiteness of his hair.

My first day at the Trusteeship Council was a disaster. A colleague of mine Avtar Singh escorted me to the right chamber, sat me down in a chair facing a plaque with INDIA inscribed on it and promptly disappeared. The meeting proceeded slowly with studied propriety

and in great solemnity, and after the preliminary and procedural formalities were over. I heard the President of the Council announce that by common consent India would assume the chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and he then offered his congratulations to "the distinguished representative of India". And all eyes turned in my direction, for the Chair had given me the floor but I was unaware of it and remained mute and wooden, until a member of the Secretariat came up to me from behind and whispered what was expected of me. I then rallied round suitably to accept gratefully the proffered congratulations.

The Secretary General of the UN then was Dag Hammarskjold who used to attend meetings of the Trusteeship Council, as they had a direct bearing on the process of decolonization. He came up to me after the meeting to say how much he was looking forward to the visit of the Mission to East Africa, as its report would have an impact on the future. The original membership of the UN was only 51, of which 20 were in Latin America, 14 belonged to the West European group, 8 in Asia, 3 in Africa, 5 in Eastern Europe plus Yugoslavia. The USA was in a position to command 39 to 40 votes for proposals of crucial importance to it, and US support for the UN was equal to none. The US Secretary of State Dean Acheson in fact regarded the UN as "an instrument of US foreign policy", which it really was. It was able to establish the sovereign state of Israel by dividing Palestine, and it also set up a UN expeditionary force under US leadership for assisting South Korea to expel the North Korean aggressors. The USA was virtually on top of the world, having resisted pressures on West Berlin, consolidated the post-war settlement in Europe and later in Korea after a war that went against it in the beginning, and having also inspired the overthrow of left-wing Governments in Guyana and Guatemala in 1953 and 1954. It was a very different UN in 1954, with only seven activist anti-colonial member states constituting a small vanguard of the movement for decolonization, i.e., Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Syria and Yugoslavia. Although many more states were sympathetic to decolonization, they were easily sat upon by the USA and other pro-colonial forces to change their votes. In those circumstances, the difficult role of leader of decolonization at the UN was thrust upon India with the invaluable support of the other six above-named countries.

A brief word first about the historical context of African colonialism. Europe discovered America, which it developed with the help of West African slave labour and enriched itself by the slave trade.

In the process it set up several trading posts on the West African coast. Although slavery was not a European invention, it was Europe that turned the slave trade into big business. By the second half of the 18th century Britain had overtaken the Dutch and the French to become the leading nation in the slave trade. Reaction set in and under the leadership of Wilberforce the movement for abolition of slavery began in England and succeeded eventually in rooting out this evil in 1837.

The moral revulsion that underlay the anti-slavery campaign found expression in movements devoted to taking European civilization to Africa through well-meaning missionaries dedicated to propagating the Christian faith, doctors healing the sick and teachers educating the ignorant. The trading establishments, missionary activities and exploration of the interior of Africa became linked together in the European mind as a moral commitment to improve humanity. European liberals saw trade as benefiting the trader and the people, and not as a form of exploitation; indeed they believed that trade would lead eventually to the liberation of Africans.

By the early 1860s the British Government assumed political control of their trading posts. Shortly thereafter, the French in the 1870s and the Germans in the 1880s began to move forward into Africa. To avoid disputes between them, Africa came to be divided in 1885 at the Berlin Congress among the European powers, which agreed that free trade was the best way of promoting Africa's economic development. In other words, they agreed to promote European interests in their allotted areas rather than take positive direct action to develop African peoples and countries.

Political control was maintained either by the European metropolitan governments directly, or through their local white communities, or indirectly through loyal African chiefs, or in some cases through equal representation for all local communities in local legislative bodies elected on restricted suffrage. The principle of paramountcy of African interests came to be enunciated only in 1930, but remained unimplemented because of differences of opinion as to what it meant in practice. It did not then mean majority African rule. Indirect rule through traditional chiefs was based on two assumptions: (i) that it was a special virtue not to interfere with African traditions, and (ii) that under the beneficent impact of European education and contacts, Africans would grow and develop in their own good time.

This gradualism was considered to be a natural process, and self-government was no more than an objective in the remote future. The principle of financial self-sufficiency was another special virtue in-

vented to relieve the European colonial power of the necessity of providing its own direct aid for development. Given time, it was argued, this principle would increase national wealth and revenue by the introduction of export crops, mining, etc., so that in the first instance education and health services could be provided. This was the political philosophy of the colonial powers in Africa until the end of the Second World War. Colonialism in Asia was treated on a different footing, as it was expected to end sooner or later after the war.

In 1919 at the end of the First World War the colonial possessions of the defeated countries (i.e., Germany and Turkey) were taken away from them, and other nations were mandated by the League of Nations to administer them, as if it were a sacred international trust. Similarly, at the end of the Second World War the former colonies of Germany, Italy and Japan were placed under the UN Trusteeship system to be administered, according to Agreements with the UN, by the following countries:

Somalia by Italy to become independent in 10 years.
Tanganyika by the United Kingdom.
Ruanda-Urundi by Belgium.
2 Togolands, one by the UK and the other by France.
2 Cameroons, one by the UK and the other by France.
W. Samoa by New Zealand.
New Guinea by Australia.
Pacific Islands Territory by the USA.

The states responsible for administering the Trust Territories were all colonial powers with colonies of their own, and in some cases for reasons of administrative convenience they administered their Trust Territories in the same manner as their colonies, but with the important difference that the administration of Trust Territories was subject to UN supervision, which included periodic visits by UN Missions, consideration of the annual reports of administration and examination of petitions from the peoples of the Territories. The Trusteeship Council was composed of the six administering member states and six others elected by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Decisions were taken by a majority vote, and a tie vote meant no decision. As a rule the administering states voted together, which could not be said of the other members.

Thus the system was designed in favour of the administering states, which collectively had the power of veto in the Trusteeship Council.

Evidently when the UN was established, the colonial powers were of the view that the end of colonialism was remote and the provisions in the UN Charter regarding colonialism were drafted accordingly. That is to say, while the basic objective of trusteeship, according to the UN Charter, was to promote progressive development towards self-government or independence in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of the Territories, its actual implementation could be delayed, if not subverted, by the Trusteeship Council's tie votes and other procedures that favoured the administering states.

The success of this system in achieving its objective depended really on how far and how fast the administering powers were prepared to go in the direction of self-government or independence. And that was a matter of policy of the major colonial powers, and was seldom related to objective conditions in the Territories, which were vastly different from one another. Besides, the administering powers were reluctant to put more speed in the political advancement of Trust Territories than of their colonial possessions. On the other hand, the detailed supervision of administration of Trust Territories by the UN and the publicity attending it had a beneficial impact on colonies too. This interrelationship was particularly underlined by the General Assembly of the UN, which had competence in regard to both Trust Territories and colonies.

Decolonization

India's strategy in the Trusteeship Council, as devised by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, was to press for independence within an adjustable time-frame through progressive transfer of power in stages to elected representatives at different levels of administration. Our view in essence was that people could acquire a sense of responsibility only by actually exercising it, and should be given political training and administrative experience at each stage with targets and flexible timetables by the administering states. We felt that such a manner of political advance in stages through training and experience with targets and time-frames announced publicly would serve to harness and channel the energies of national liberation movements, which otherwise would find themselves at cross purposes with the administration. This Indian point of view was accepted and endorsed by the General Assembly of the UN, and in the Trusteeship Council the administering powers without supporting the concept nevertheless agreed to special

Missions to Trust Territories to assess the situation and make recommendations about targets and time-frames for them.

I was a member of the first such Mission in 1954 to the East African Trust Territories of Somaliland, Tanganyika, Ruanda and Urundi. There were three other members of the Mission representing New Zealand, the USA and El Salvador. Our mandate was to recommend periods within which the peoples of the four territories might be granted independence, and in formulating our recommendations we were to take into account the views expressed by the peoples as well as the administering powers. We were free to visit any part of any Territory, meet anyone we liked including political parties, tribal leaders and other representative groups, and were given access to information about the resources of the Territories. We also visited neighbouring colonies and countries with which the Trust Territories had problems or had common administrative arrangements, such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and the Congo.

Somaliland was the only Territory that already had a date fixed for its independence. It was exceptional in this and in one other respect. Italy was a defeated "enemy" in the Second World War, but as it had opted out of it earlier and joined the side of the victorious Allied Powers, it was rewarded by allowing it to administer its former colony as a Trust Territory, but on condition that it would grant it independence in ten years. It served as a good enough precedent to use against other administering powers, but the latter found the Indian concept of time tables academic and impractical. They could conceive of only the first step and wait for it to be over before they could envisage the next step, whereas we thought of the operation as a play in three or four acts with fixed times for each act and for the whole play. Academically speaking, much could be said in favour of both viewpoints, but in terms of practical politics only targets and time-frames would secure the cooperation of the nationalist forces, which was essential for peace. But the colonial mind had become habituated to the policy of giving too little too late. On the other hand, the radicalized nationalists, as in Guyana in 1953, wanted too much too soon. The Indian plan was, we thought, a happy via media worth a trial.

In the Mission I naturally advocated the Indian concept with all seriousness as the right way to fulfil a sacred trust. I had the support of El Salvador and the committed opposition of New Zealand. The US delegate Mason Sears appeared to be opposing the Indian view not on merits but because it was Indian! His attitude was a typical outgrowth of the McCarthy era in the USA, when those not with the USA were

regarded as against it, and India and Indians were suspected of being communist. It amused me vastly to be flattered as an enemy of the USA and I did nothing to correct this impression. Mason Sears took a whole month, during which we travelled together to various parts of Africa, to make up his mind about me. I remember him telling me at breakfast overlooking Lake Kivu that he had been mistaken in thinking that I was a communist. Thereafter, he began to evaluate my views on their merits and often lent them his support, thereby making them the majority position in the Mission. As a Yankee he was nationalist, independent and fiercely anti-colonial and these qualities helped him to win many African friends for his country.

Ruanda-Urundi

Ruanda-Urundi was the first Territory to be visited by us, and as it was administered as a part of Belgian Congo, we met the Governor-General M. Petillon, a small, self-confident and dynamic official. The Territory was well-administered in a paternalistic sort of way; the labour force was fully employed and well-fed, and the general health and hospital facilities were surprisingly good. I commented favourably on these aspects and then the conversation with the Governor General went as follows:

RJ: But why is it that education stops at the high school level?
GG: No, it does not. The students go to the Polytechnic for industrial and other forms of training.
RJ: What about University training and engineering, medical and law schools?
GG: They are not ready for it. Some do go to Belgium for religious training. The Bishop of Leopoldville is an African trained in Louvain.
RJ: What is the qualification for voting?
GG: An African may vote if he is registered as an evoluee, that is to say, he must be registered as having evolved as a civilized person.
RJ: How many such Africans are there in this Register?
GG: So far ten persons. 9 of them are away in Belgium, as they are married to Belgian women. The tenth is the Bishop.
RJ: I have received a petition presented by three young African Christian clergymen seeking independence in 30 years. In

your expert opinion how long would it take to train these people for independence?

GG: If all of them were clergymen, may be 30 years, may be more.

RJ: We have been asked by the UN as a Mission to seek your assessment.

GG: It is extremely difficult to give a time-frame for independence. You must not forget these people came down from the trees not long ago. It will take them at least five generations to evolve.

RJ: Since you are prepared to leave the ministration of your spiritual welfare to an African Bishop trained in theology in Europe, I feel sure Africans can also be trained in mundane matters.

GG: But Congo is not India.

I decided to end my share of the conversation on that bizarre pro-India note! However, we did meet other officials, notably Belgian socialists, who sounded more hopeful than the Governor General.

Tanganyika

Our next stop was Tanganyika, where the British Governor Sir Edward Twining also refused to commit himself as to the period required for training the people of his Territory to independence. Instead he pumped us for our views and questioned their validity. The situation in this British administered territory was dramatically different from the paternalism of Belgium and was all too familiar to me. There were no restrictions on education or political activity, and although the administration preferred indirect rule through traditional chiefs, the leading political party Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) was broad-based, democratic and had independence as its goal. Its leader was Julius Nyerere, a modest schoolmaster widely known for his personal integrity and a great admirer of Mahatma Gandhi. The colonial administration did not encourage our Mission to meet him, as his party had a membership of only a few thousand and was not regarded as popular. My own information was the contrary and so I arranged to meet him first privately.

Nyerere admitted that his party's membership was small but that was because the entrance fee was beyond the means of the rank and file of his vast country-wide following. I told him then of a similar

problem faced by Gandhiji, who resolved it by reducing the fee to 25 paise. He replied, "Why didn't I think of it?" I showed him a copy of our Mission's tour programme and I hoped that at every place visited by us his party would give a peaceful demonstration of its popularity for the benefit of both the British administration and the U.N. Nyerere acted quickly to reduce the entrance fee to 1sh 6d and to enrol as many members as possible, so that all over the Territory our Mission was treated to huge mass demonstrations of public support from men, women and children. We met the local leaders of TANU, who gave us a written petition for independence and provided us with any information we sought. It was all very orderly and peaceful, and discipline was maintained by gentle school children, boys and girls, a fine touch to show up the administration which had discouraged us from meeting them on the ground that it could not guarantee our security!

There was no question thereafter that TANU was like the Indian National Congress and that Nyerere would emerge like Jawaharlal Nehru as his country's leader after independence. The question that still remained for our Mission to tackle was the time-frame for independence. The British administration would not budge from its view that a time-frame would be unrealistic, and while constitutional advance should be in stages, each stage should first be consolidated and in the light of the experience gained the next stage should be determined. The Governor, in fact, said to me that as the concept of political progress through targeted stages with time-tables within a fixed period for attaining independence had originated from Prime Minister Nehru, he would advise his Government that the reply might be given by Prime Minister Churchill. There was one other problem and that had to do with parity of representation in the central legislative body between Africans, Asians and Europeans. The Africans were 8 million strong, the Asians 79,000 and the Europeans 20,300. The British administration seemed to be building a multi-racial society on the basis of parity of representation. Nyerere and TANU had agreed to parity only as a temporary expedient and not as a permanent state of affairs. The Mission's recommendation was that when the life of the parity legislature was up, it should be changed to provide for a substantial African majority.

When our Mission was in London at the end of our tour, I was taken by Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Colonial Secretary, for a brief meeting with Prime Minister Churchill, who gave me the following clever reply: "You should know better from your own experience that political concessions are made only under pressure. Decolonization will not be

according to pre-determined time-tables. It could come about sooner than fixed target dates." I was quite speechless, for what he said was true enough and was borne out by subsequent events. Our Mission, however, stuck to its position and recommended (i) that Ruanda-Urundi could be developed to become self-governing, if not independent, in 20 to 25 years, and (ii) that Tanganyika could become self-governing or independent sooner and that within the main target should be set intermediate targets and dates for advancement in stages. However, we entered a caveat that as the administering states – Belgium and Great Gritain – did not favour the course recommended by us, other factors might well intervene, internally or externally, to speed up progress towards independence, which is what eventually happened.

Somalia

The high degree of political party activity in Somaliland, the last Territory visited by our Mission, was the most unique and impressive encountered by us in Africa. It certainly and fully justified the decision of the UN that the Territory should become independent in 1960, ten years after the commencement of its trusteeship. But regrettably the Italian administration had done little to fulfil its own responsibility to the people, who had been clamouring and were ready for participation in the business of government. There had been for four years of trusteeship no elections and no plans for transfer of executive responsibility at any level to the Somalis. All executive and legislative powers were vested in the person of the Italian Administrator who continued to govern through his nominees, as if trusteeship was for an indefinite period. There were 15 political parties and the most popular was the Somali Youth League. Elections to municipal councils had been held only on the eve of our visit. All political parties agitated before us for elections to a central legislature without delay and for transfer of some executive authority to elected Ministers. The incredible ineptitude of the Administration, we found, was due to the fact that the Government of Italy had entrusted the governance of the Territory to former Fascists who could not be employed elsewhere, and who were quite innocent of the ways of democracy. When our Mission was in Rome at the end of our inspection, we made known our views in no uncertain terms to the Government of Italy, which promised to have the situation cleaned up in three months, which they did with alacrity.

The other problem that was raised by all political parties at every meeting with the Mission was the provisional character of the border with Ethiopia, which cut across tribal areas, cut off tribes and their animal stock from traditional sources of water and pasturage, and restricted the free movement of nomadic Somalis living on both sides. The Somalis were most anxious that the international frontier should be definitively established before the end of trusteeship, but Ethiopia apparently was prepared only to delimit the provisional border, and not to negotiate a permanent boundary. There was little doubt in our minds that the absence of a definitive boundary would lead to war between Somalia and Ethiopia after 1960. In view of Ethiopia's stubborn posture, the Mission could recommend no more than international mediation. Additionally, after a visit by Mason Sears and myself to the border areas, we recommended the creation of a neutralized zone 20 kilometres wide along the provisional border so as to facilitate free access to water and grazing for the tribal peoples.

The reports of our Visiting Mission to four African Trust Territories created quite a stir at that time in the UN, because for the first time there was a recommendation for independence to be achieved within a fixed period, and through a process of development in stages that would make the Territories politically stable and economically viable. The recommendation was rejected by the colonial powers ostensibly because it was impractical, but really because they desired to hang on to their territorial possessions as long as possible in their own interests. I would add that the last thing they wanted of their colonies was that they should be truly independent, politically stable and economically viable. The nationalist forces in the Territories were left with only the option of mounting a struggle to wrest their freedom from the colonial powers, and in that struggle they welcomed help and support from socialist countries.

This created a new situation and lent a new dimension to the east-west cold war. France and Great Britain blundered badly in invading the Suez Canal zone of Egypt, and the USA was beginning to lose its grip over the UN. It became necessary for the colonial powers to take a hard look at the likely impact of the changing scene on national liberation struggles. The colonial powers evidently realized that in their own interest socialist support for these struggles should not be allowed to consolidate itself in political gain. And so they opted for economic control rather than political power. The major colonial powers – Belgium, France and Great Britain – decided to quit their African territories after handing over political power to elected African territories

after handing over political power to elected Africans but retaining the economic levers. The then British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan called this dramatic reversal of colonial policy "the wind of change". Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana chose to refer to it as "neo-colonialism which is imperialism in its final and perhaps most dangerous stage". He may have been right, for its present manifestation is the enormous gap in wealth between the north and the south, which Barbara Ward described as "a sort of international class war".

It is a pity the Nehru idea of political advance expanding from one stage to the next through training and experience and culminating in independence within a fixed period did not find favour with the colonial powers. Its rejection was a landmark, for had it succeeded, it would have shown what decolonization might have been with a human face instead of the "neo- colonialism" it turned out to be in so many cases. The UN has been the burial ground of many great ideas, and this was one of India's grand failures. They were eventful years at the UN – 1954 to 1959 – when I served on the Trusteeship Council and the First and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly. Krishna Menon was then our chief delegate with Ministerial rank, and he was the No. 1 attraction for the American public. Nehru's was the strategy, Menon's the tactics and India's prestige was at the highest point at the UN in the 1950s.

United Nations Emergency Force

This is not the place to speak of all the events at the UN during those years, but I shall refer only to such matters of general interest as come to mind. India played a very active role at the UN in 1956 during the discussions that resulted in the UN Secretary General being authorized to constitute through voluntary contributions a UN Emergency Force for Egypt in order to facilitate the withdrawal of British, French and Israeli troops which had invaded the Suez Canal zone. Dag Hammarksjold had asked for contributions of troops from some selected countries including India. Egypt had a problem with Canadian forces as they were regarded by it as part of the white British Commonwealth, and there was some delay in the arrival of replies from the consulted countries. This delay greatly worried Hammarskjold who began to suspect a conspiracy to sabotage his efforts, and so he appealed to Nehru to help him get started soon, lest the withdrawal of the aggressors should become more complicated with lapse of time. Nehru responded almost immediately with the offer of an Indian brigade,

which prompted the other countries to come forward with their own offers, and Hammarskjold was moved to exclaim "Thank God for India".

Towards the end of 1956 Hammarksjold spoke to me at lunch one day at the UN and after the usual compliments about India's contributions enquired if I would be interested in joining the UN Secretariat in the Trusteeship Division as the Director for Africa. I was quite flattered, though I had my doubts from the career point of view about becoming an Africa specialist. I replied that the decision was not mine alone, for the Government of India would have to be consulted and he said he intended doing so, which he did. At the same time our Government had taken the decision to post me to Nigeria as charge d'affaires to open our Mission there. Krishna Menon took the matter completely out of my hands by saying "No" to the Government and to the UN Secretary-General, and so I stayed on at my job for two more years. The man who eventually joined the Secretariat as Director for Africa, Heinrich Wieschhoff, died with Hammarskjold when his aircraft crashed near Ndola on 17 September 1961.

Hungary

India's vote on the situation in Hungary in 1956 following the intervention of Soviet troops caused a great deal of misgiving at the UN and more so in India, and Krishna Menon has been wrongly criticized for the vote. Actually, it was his explanation of vote that caused all the controversy, but the vote itself was cast by me. The vote was on a draft resolution sponsored by the USA seeking to condemn the USSR and to send a UN observer group to Hungary. The debate took the entire day and it seemed as if it would continue the next day as well, and so around 6 p.m. my boss Ambassador Arthur Lall left the Plenary Hall for home, leaving me to hold the fort. An hour after his departure Cabot Lodge, the US Ambassador, moved that a vote be taken at once and the debate suspended, and his motion was carried. I went to him to enquire if he could not postpone the vote to the following day, as Krishna Menon was due to arrive the next morning and speak in the debate. He grinned at me in his fiercest manner and said, "That is a good enough reason to vote right away!" I telephoned Arthur Lal for instructions and the poor man had none, for Krishna Menon was personally bringing them with him. And so I rushed back to the Plenary just in time for the roll call vote, and when India's turn came I shouted

"Abstain".

The next morning we all went to the airport to receive the great man and I was pushed to the front as the sacrificial lamb. I recounted the events of the previous evening, and then ensued the following exchange:

KM: (to Arthur Lall) Where were you?
AL: At home at dinner. But had I been at the UN, I wouldn't have done any better.
KM: (to me) Why didn't you move that the vote be taken today?
RJ: Lodge's motion had priority and had to be voted on first. There were two statements opposing it, according to the rules.
KM: I know the rules. Why did you abstain?
RJ: As a rule we abstain when we are without instructions. The alternative was to be absent and in this case absence would have been inexcusable.
KM: Did you explain your abstention?
RJ: No, Sir.
KM: At least you did something right. Put me down to speak this morning. Very bad staff work all round.

At this point our Administrative Attaché rushed forward to offer Krishna Menon a cup of tea that had got tepid along the way, and somehow he tripped spilling the tea all over Menon's Saville Row suit. And the blast came with the fury and the sarcasm, as he turned to Arthur Lall and said, "Send this waiter chap back to India to be trained in serving tea. Don't let me see him again." Menon addressed the Plenary the same day saying, "Yesterday India abstained from voting not for lack of instructions, but because, etc., etc." and he went on to give a list of reasons that would have justified our voting against the US resolution rather than abstaining, and therefore they became controversial.

US Prisoners

Krishna Menon and Dag Hammarskjold never got on. Full of smiles face to face and exceedingly nice when they wanted something out of each other but behind their backs mutual suspicions and innuendos filled the air. Their personalities poles apart, both were prima ballerinas wanting the limelight to perform. Their best performances were invariably superb but their worst were best forgotten. They were

intensely jealous of each other, and in the business of one trying to steal the other's thunder Hammarskjold had the better of the exchanges, except on one occasion. Both had sought to secure the release of 15 Americans taken prisoner by the Chinese during the Korean war. Hammarskjold was requested by the General Assembly of the UN to seek their return, because they had been operating under the UN command, and so he chose to visit Peking with Rajeshwar Dayal as his aide. Menon saw to it that Nehru refused to permit Dayal to accompany Hammarskjold!

Chou En-lai received Hammarskjold in Peking on 5 January 1955 and had several meetings, which did not lead to the expected release of the prisoners. Hammarskjold returned disappointed with the result, but was so impressed by Chou En-lai as to say, "he has the most superior brain I have so far met in the field of foreign politics"! In April 1955 an Air India plane carrying Chinese delegates to the Bandung Conference was blown up in the air and CIA involvement was suspected. That incident further complicated the question of the American prisoners, and Hammarskjold requested Nehru's help in the matter. Krishna Menon went to Peking in the last week of May and met Chou En-lai. On 30 May Peking decided to deport 4 American prisoners to Hong Kong and Krishna Menon was the first to announce it publicly, Hammarskjold doing so on the next day. Apparently both had been informed simultaneously by Peking; the US Government sent notes of appreciation to Nehru and Hammarskjold. Menon said in an interview, "I had the greatest difficulty in persuading Chou En-lai to release the American fliers on account of Hammarskjold!" And Hammarksjold said that Menon had been crossing wires in Peking and characterised his freewheeling as "an example of political innocence in a rare state of purity!" But Chou En-lai managed to take the credit, for on Hammarskjold's birthday 1 August the remaining 11 Americans were released, and Chou said their release was ordered "to maintain friendship with Hammarskjold and had no connection with the UN", of which Peking was then not a member. Earlier on 25 July Peking had agreed to have direct talks with the USA at Ambassadorial level at Geneva, which might well have been the long-term aim of Chou En-lai in his dignified and extended handling of the prisoners' issue.

Krishna Menon

Krishna Menon had mastered the rules of procedure of the UN, was

familiar with the working of the League of Nations, had a wide- ranging knowledge of international law, legal decisions of the World Court and the constitutional history of the USA and the UK. Thus equipped and with the additional assets of political acumen and epileptic eloquence, he was able to subject the UN to his intellectual domination. In public debate and argument he was unbeatable, and few would take him on; in private talks he was persuasive and accommodating, and would readily admit that while he may be able to change minds, it was alas not easy to change votes. I used to dread having to "brief" him on any issue, for the meeting would invariably end by his briefing me about the host of things I did not know! He used to say that he knew so much more than others, because he had been a student till the age of 45! People with lost causes, delegates with weak cases and cranks with ingenious proposals would seek him out. He was the only representative whose movements and meetings at the UN were closely watched and monitored by the delegations of the USA and the UK, whose interest was to find out "What is Krishna up to?" We on his staff were usually ignorant about his plans and thinking; I believe that often he did not himself know in advance.

It was an education to see him operate at the UN. On some question related to disarmament, to which he was totally dedicated, he asked me during the debate on it to draft a resolution without giving me instructions about its content or thrust. What he expected of me apparently was to put down on paper what I thought about the sort of resolution that the UN should adopt. After listening to the views of a few countries I drafted a resolution and gave it to him. He went over it, amended it and added to it significantly and asked me to table it. It was the first resolution on that particular item and it naturally attracted the attention of all delegations and they reacted to it in their statements. In the light of their reactions Krishna Menon amended our resolution taking into account the various suggestions made and circulated it as the first revision of our text. In this manner over several days he issued as many as five revisions indicating the extent of India's positive response to the views of others. Soon enough the debate found itself focussing on the Indian initiative, and delegations whose views had been incorporated into our draft asked to co-sponsor it. Thus Menon maximized support for the draft by reducing and isolating the opposition. Finally, he introduced the draft by reducing and isolating the opposition. Finally, he introduced the draft resolution with a fine speech and got it adopted by a substantial majority.

There are many instances of his clever handling and masterly control

of situations that developed at the UN, but I shall mention only two. Greece had inscribed a new item entitled "Enosis of Cyprus", i.e., union of Cyprus with Greece. Turkey wanted double enosis, i.e., partition of Cyprus into Greek and Turkish areas and their integration with Greece and Turkey respectively. Greece and Turkey are members of NATO, whereas Cyprus was a British colony. Krishna Menon changed the whole character of the debate by advocating self-determination and independence for Cyprus, and his views came to be welcomed and supported by Cypriots of Greek and Turkish origin. The General Assembly then changed the item to "self-determination and independence for Cyprus", much to the chagrin of Greece and Turkey.

The other instance was the Kashmir question which in 1957 cropped up again in the Security Council. Krishna Menon delivered himself of a long-winded and detailed exposition of its alpha and omega, and in the process exhausted himself and his audience. There was nothing he had left unsaid. When one read his statement in the verbatim record the next day, it turned out to be a detailed history and comprehensive analysis of the legal and political aspects of the complex problem. He collapsed during his peroration, and while unkind wags said he was revived by waving the microphone under his nose, he had to be given in fact an injection. During the debate the UK delegation took the initiative to draft a resolution and consulted selected members of the Security Council and Pakistan. It was customary to consult both India and Pakistan, but for reasons not known India had been left out. Menon told us at one of our morning meetings to fan out and use our resources and ingenity to find out what the British game was.

I was lunching that very day with my Australian colleague in the Trusteeship Council and complained to him that we were still in the dark about what was cooking in the Security Council on the Kashmir question. He thought it was all wrong that we should not have been consulted, whereas Australia had been though it was not a member of the Security Council! And he pulled out the British draft resolution and gave it to me swearing me to secrecy about how I had come by it. During the afternoon meeting I showed it to Menon and he wanted me to reveal the source. I refused to do so and after further cross questioning he seemed satisfied as to its genuineness. He then marched into the Council, asked for the floor, waved the draft resolution and read it into the record as an example of British partisanship. The effect was instantaneous. Pierson Dixon, the British delegate, red in the face, explained that he had fully intended to consult India at a later stage, but since Menon had now expressed his reservations on the draft, it

was dead for all practical purposes.

When Menon was in New York, the news broke about his appointment as Defence Minister in April 1957. I had arranged to meet him about some other matter that very morning at his hotel at 6 a.m.; his insomnia compelled him to observe an erratic working schedule. He was in a reflective mood when I saw him, and I congratulated him and said it was a pity we should not see him as often in the future. He remained brooding for a while and then the conversation went as follows:

KM: What do you think I should do as Defence Minister besides the usual things?

RJ: (after brooding awhile) Well, Sir, we have a good parade ground and battle field army, and in emergencies they have been of crucial help to the civil authorities. Here at the UN we get a bird's-eye view of the world, and we have seen military rule imposed in many countries when politicians make a hash of things, and the military regimes end up by making an even bigger mess. If such a thing were to happen in our country, our military chaps should put up a better show. Perhaps they should be taught the mysteries of foreign policy, administration, economic development, social progress, etc.

KM: (coming out of a deep brown-study) What utter nonsense? They will call me a Fascist! I had better have them make coffee percolators! You are't serious, old man, are you?

RJ: No, Sir; but as the song says "que sera, sera". (What will be, will be.)

Krishna Menon's departure from the UN revealed that he was indeed irreplaceable. There were Indians and Americans who felt relieved and happy when he left, for he had upset them by his offensive defence of India's rights, interests and policies, and by his style of carrying the fight to the home ground of the critics. He loved turning the tables on the critics so that they felt intimidated enough to moderate their criticisms of India, and to think twice before tackling him again. I don't think he did any harm to India's image; on the contrary he showed the other side of India, its fighting spirit and erudition. But of course, he did a great deal of harm to his own image and he could not care less. He had several personal failings and quirks – his temperament, his insomnia, his sense of insecurity, his apprehensions and insinuations and his favourites. He had few friends and many enemies,

and I don't believe he was ever happy, except when he was in the company of children.

I was not one of his favourites, and I think he realized that I preferred to keep my distance. I certainly found it hard to work for him but the reward lay in learning from him the do's and don'ts of how to operate at the UN. His saving grace was his own discovery, Arthur Lall, his affable antithesis, who was an expert in picking up the bits and pieces of Humpty Dumpty and putting him back on the wall. A perceptive friend of mine, a French diplomat, said, "Krishna Menon was more than India's representative – he was truly a formidable phenomenon! For when he addressed the UN, he caused many different reactions: the Indians seemed both proud and embarrassed! the Americans were usually irritated; the Russians looked strangely baffled; the French were really bored but looked interested, and the only ones who understood him were the British, who were often the butt of his criticism!"

I had my share of good fortune in meeting at the UN a wide spectrum of interesting personalities from film stars to statesmen. All of them had a deep and abiding interest in India, because of the richness of its antiquity, its philosophy and culture, and its Gandhian belief in non-violent change. And in their despair after two horrendous world wars they looked to India to show them by its behaviour the way to a new gentle world of tranquillity and moderation. Hope still springs in their breasts, even though India has failed them so far by imitating them rather than blazing its own trail. I should like to mention two of the personalities I met, because of their messages for Nehru which I transmitted. Aldous Huxley gave me a beautifully written short letter for Nehru in 1954 begging him to establish urgently a control regime for our population growth, for without it (he feared) "the uniquely Indian species of the human race would be utterly debased and devoured by its ever growing multitudes". In 1955 Kwame Nkrumah asked me to convey to Nehru his message that India should not sit back after the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement, but actively pursue a negotiated settlement of a definitive boundary with China. For without it, as he said, "Where does China end, where does India begin?" He felt that once this problem was resolved, India would be able to forge ahead, and that would be good for all newly independent countries. Most of the others I met had one simple message for Nehru: to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Postscript

Gratten-Bellew, the British Attorney General of the Trust Territory of Tanganyika, speaking in the Trusteeship Council of the U.N., strongly opposed the introduction of universal adult suffrage, as the Territory had a largely backward illiterate tribal population. Instead he advocated a franchise restricted to a small section of the people living in its few urban areas and including the Chiefs of the major tribes. On India's behalf I spoke at length in favour of adult suffrage employing the usual arguments for it, and expressed the view that it was a respectable political device for getting rid of colonialism peacefully. The extension of the voting right as widely as possible was useful for providing training and experience to the people, whereas its restriction would be seen as designed to prolong the colonial rule. But once the Territory became independent, it was open to its elected legislature in the exercise of its sovereignty to limit the suffrage in the manner and for the purpose it considered necessary. This last comment was seized upon by the British press to misquote me as favouring restricted suffrage and the Indian press copied it. I was called to order by Nehru and by way of explanation I sent him the verbatim record of my verbal duel with Gratten-Bellew. The reaction of Nehru was classic—"Had I been in your shoes, I would have given him hell." I thought it best to leave it to Krishna Menon to do so in his own matchless manner at the Council.

On a later occasion I actually got hell from Nehru. At an Officers' meeting in 1960 he spoke forcefully about the need for serving the Government with a greater sense of "commitment". During the ensuing discussion I ventured to say that a civil servant ought to remain neutral but loyal and efficient, and that nothing more should be expected of him. I went on to clarify that I felt committed to Nehru's policies only because I agreed with them, but I might not feel the same way about the policies of future Govts. I had, therefore, decided not to exercise my right to vote until after my retirement so as to avoid any inner conflict. Nehru exploded at my temerity saying I was confused and was splitting hairs, and his fury subsided only when some agreed with him. In retrospect I think subsequent events have borne out my views.

5.

IN THE MINISTRY

After a continuous spell of eleven years of serving abroad I wanted a home posting, but shortage of posts at headquarters and stiff competition for them tended to reduce my chances. Our two girls were ready for High School and my wife was determined that they should finish their schooling in India, form their friendships, get to know their relations, etc. I had applied for a home posting "through proper channels", but the rumour mill had it that I was being considered for yet another foreign assignment! I decided then to enlist the support of my Member of Parliament from Allahabad for an assignment at home. I wrote to him saying that after a eleven-year absence I could not properly represent abroad what I had lost touch with for so long. Although I received no reply from my M.P., he seemed to have acted at once, for I was asked to come home in March 1959. The fact that my M.P. was also the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister was a pure coincidence in my favour!

However, on my return I was ticked off by Foreign Secretary, S. Dutt, for my novel approach. He said he could offer me nothing more interesting than a Deputy Secretaryship in the Administration, and I accepted it without demur but expressed the hope that later I might be given some experience in a Territorial Division. After a few months in Administration, where I made myself unwelcome by criticizing it during examination of representations from aggrieved personnel, I was transferred to the Desk responsible for our relations with Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, Japan and Korea. I could not have hoped for more exciting work; it involved a good deal of travel to the areas bordering China.

Those were unforgettable years, 1959 to 1962, when Nehru was at the peak of his form as a world statesman, and it was a special thrill working in the Ministry under his leadership. As Foreign Minister, he had an excellent grasp of international affairs and of the important trends at work. He saw India and her future in the context of the

long-term world view rather than in the narrow perspective of relations with her neighbours. It is a mistake to regard him as anti-American; nor was he pro-Soviet Union. He perceived the USA and the USSR as the protagonists of two great political experiments, which were unfortunately subjected to the strains of an arms race based on mutual suspicions and fears stemming from the harsh lessons of two world wars. He was disappointed that they were unable to rise above their differences and disputes and lead humanity to an era of enduring peace. They had been expected to provide this leadership after signing the UN Charter; instead they inflicted the cold war on themselves and on the world as a whole. Nehru's reaction was India's non-alignment, a policy intended to keep it out of the cold war, as it was also to broaden the area of peace.

With the achievement of sovereign independence, a nationalist leader, who has the wisdom to realize that the first phase of the national struggle is over, would try to promote national aims less on the basis of exclusively national interests and more in relation to the international order envisaged by the UN Charter. This is especially true of non-aligned countries which, lacking the realpolitik of military alliances, depend on the UN's collective support for safeguarding their freedom. Nehru's internationalism was firmly rooted in enlightened nationalism in the context of world peace and cooperation. Nehru was the thinker, the policy-maker and the statesman, while the contributions of those around him were mainly in the field of implementation. A voracious file reader Nehru often sought outside opinions, but in the end he set forth his own ideas on paper in his neat handwriting. Not for him the chaos of the conclave, or the whispers of conspirators, or the choice from among the options pre-determined by his staff; he preferred the silent company of his own thoughts in the solitude of his study to decide.

Dutt, the Foreign Secretary, provided me with the opportunity to work with Nehru. Because of the pressure of time involved, he authorized me to submit directly to Nehru all files concerning Parliamentary business relating to my areas of responsibility. I was very nervous of course but tried not to show it, and in course of time the nervousness left me altogether. I was required to draft replies to questions, statements, declarations etc., and prepare background notes to answer supplementary questions. My files were invariably returned by Nehru within 24 hours with the stamp of his prodigious mind and authority imprinted on them. I could see from his comments and corrections not only future guidance for me but also the interpretation, application and evolution of policy. I met him seldom at his office

but mostly at his official dinners and lunches. Working for him was a most rewarding educational experience, and I developed a silent admiration for the quality of his mind and his humanity.

Nepal

Nepal, the only Hindu Kingdom in the world, remaining outside India might seem odd, but a secular, democratic republican India would not tolerate a Hindu Kingdom as an integral part of it. Such thoughts crossed my mind when I saw in a file of 1950 that King Tribhuvan of Nepal, then under siege by the ruling Rana clique, had written to Nehru expressing his wish to accede to India! Although Nehru declined to accept the Kingly offer, there was much to be said in favour of Tribhuvan's view. Ethnicity, language, culture and a variety of historic trans-border ties as well as the realities of common security enjoined two alternatives – either a Treaty arrangement for special relations, or complete integration. The people of Nepal ought to have had a say in the matter, but kings will be kings as long as sovereignty resided in them in Nepal, and the former option was the King's choice.

King Mahendra, the son of Tribhuvan, succeeded him and had other ideas. He dismissed the popularly elected Nepali Congress Government, and assumed dictatorial powers. The leaders of the Nepali Congress fled to India and were granted asylum. Relations with India then took a turn for the worse, Mahendra making the point that India should not take Nepal for granted, while we had been making the reverse point that Nepal should not take India for granted. I had gone to Nepal as a political adviser to our Delegation to negotiate the 1960 Trade and Transit Agreement. There was precious little of the atmosphere of special relations between the two negotiating teams, although the average untutored apolitical Nepali regarded India as something special, inevitable and enduring. What worried me then, as it does now, is the sheer incapacity of Nepal's representatives to recognize this widespread popular feeling and translate it into the fabric of inter-state relationships. The dominant atmosphere of the negotiations that took place between the two official delegations was mutuality of suspicions. India's concern was to plug every loophole, real or imaginary, for smuggling. Nepal's concern was to prevent its sovereignty's erosion, real or imaginary. High-minded attempts were brilliantly made by the articulate K.B. Lall to remove Nepal's apprehensions, but they failed to achieve their purpose. Realising the existence of a communication

gap (and also in my view a comprehension gap) Lall passed the buck to the diplomats in our relay team. Our Ambassador Harishwar Dayal, known for his savoir-faire, met King Mahendra a couple of times and as a result understanding and enlightenment flowed down from the King to his officials, and a bilateral agreement was finally reached.

Obsessed as King of Nepal is with the mystique of his sovereignty, it must be very difficult for him to make the adjustment and accommodation necessary for the Nepalese rose to exist between the two formidable Indian and Chinese thorns. The predicament of a buffer state is unenviable at the best of times when the modus vivendi is the tranquillity of acceptable tolerance. Nepal's answer to her own problem is to present the face of sweetness and light to China, and the face of injured innocence to India. There is in Nepal ill-concealed contempt for Indians and for democratic India stemming from years of Nepalese experience of manipulating in their favour the levers of power in India, with the help of the pro-Nepal Indian lobby.

India does not seem to have minded this so much, but what bothers us more are Nepal's attempts to play off China against India. It is risky enough for Nepal, but for India it is seen as the razor's edge. In my lighter moments I have tried to sound the average well-informed Nepalese as to what they thought of this dangerous game. The straightforward reaction I got every time was that Nepal calculated the risks carefully, and hoped that India would not over-react! And if Indian over-reaction should result in a general mess, what would happen to Nepal? To this question I was given the honest reply: "Nepal would suffer of course. But the Nepalese would run not to China, but to India and will not stop running until they got to Bangalore! Where else can they run?" Special relations with India mean for Nepal the "right" of free transit, limitless sovereignty for itself and freedom to play the China card to India's detriment.

As a response to increasing movements of troops by China along its entire frontier with the subcontinent, Nehru in a statement in Parliament declared that aggression against Nepal would be regarded as aggression against India. This was in fact an interpretation of the letters exchanged during the signing of the 1950 Treaty. Nepal did not quite know how to react; it could not very well support Nehru, without appearing to be a Protectorate of India, nor could it oppose without questioning the validity of India's perceptions of danger to her security. Nepal contented itself by saying after some time that it did not expect aggression from any quarter. As a policy Nehru's declaration was both necessary and timely, and there was no dissent in Parliament. When

the debate was over, I discovered that Nehru's statement of policy had been made off the cuff!

Even so I took the initiative to start a file and explore in consultation with the Defence Ministry and the Army Chief the wherewithal for implementing this important policy. The file had got quite big with estimates of costs and forces by the time it came back, and I sent it to Foreign Secretary Dutt, who in turn marked it to Nehru. There followed higher level meetings, consultations with Finance etc. before things were done to strengthen our forces. But I got ticked off by Dutt in a general sort of way about starting important initiatives on my own without his prior approval.

Sikkim and Bhutan

Among my responsibilities was our special relations with Sikkim, a small Princely State overwhelmed by its proximity to Mount Kanchenjunga. It was ruled by a tiny other-worldly Maharajah whose chief interest was painting with fantastic colours mountain-scapes each with a deity perched in a corner. He was assisted in administering his Territory by a Dewan provided by India. The presence of an Indian Political Officer, in my time the legendary Apa B. Pant, ensured scrupulous observance of our Treaty with Sikkim, whereby India was responsible for its defence, foreign affairs, finance, communications, etc. The ruling family was of Tibetan origin, while the majority of people were Nepalese.

In 1947-48 when our Princely States were acceding to India under popular pressures, this quaint old Maharajah too wanted Sikkim to be integrated with India, but he was dissuaded from pursuing that course by his enterprising son and his two comely daughters. In retrospect this ruling family may well have regretted foregoing the generous privy purses and other privileges awarded to acceding rulers, and preferring the status quo of Treaty relations. From our point of view, the State of Sikkim in the constitutional sense was no different from Patiala or Mysore, and should have been absorbed at the same time. But the Maharajah's family was obsessed with the trappings of sovereignty and developed strange longings for membership of the United Nations. Sikkimese illusions of grandeur and pretensions to royal status served to breed suspicions and mistrust both in Bhutan and Tibet, and the ruling family had to be brought down to earth from time to time. However, it began to develop links with certain elements in Japan,

Hong Kong and the USA, and its activities caused concern in China, which reacted at once causing in turn concern in India.

We had quite a time keeping a close watch on the comings and goings of members of the ruling family and alternately pampering them with import licences which they sold to Indian traders, or disciplining them by denying certain facilities and exposing their adventures. They were a clever bunch who knew how to get round the higher echelons in our Government, and Nehru generously pardoned their shortcomings. They ran Sikkim as if it were their personal fief and managed to antagonize the Nepalese majority, which set up a constant clamour for self-determination through elections based on adult suffrage. It was extremely difficult for us to sustain the rule of the Maharajah, and at the same time keep at bay the majority population with futile promises of democratization. Sikkim's strategic situation on the border required us to ensure domestic peace in the State so as to prevent internal events from being exploited by China. We were able in my time to establish, despite the reluctance of the Maharaj Kumar, an Indian military contingent and several border posts in Sikkim.

The role of our Political Officer was crucial to the success of our policy in Sikkim, which was the maintenance of our Treaty relations, whereas the ruling family's private policy was to erode the Treaty in the direction of independence. Apa Saheb, our Political Officer, was uniquely qualified to implement the policy of democratization, for he was the son of the Maharajah of Aundh, who during British days voluntarily handed over power to the elected majority in his State. In response to my hypothetical question as to how soon, in the event of an emergency, the majority in Sikkim could be got ready to take over charge, Apa replied in "ten days to two weeks". And that was exactly what happened fifteen years later, the integration of Sikkim with India! At a UN luncheon in 1974 Senator Claiborne Pell told me that Hope Cooke, American Queen of Sikkim, was lobbying the US Congress for raising Sikkim's self-determination at the next General Assembly session. I lost no time in passing on this disturbing news to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and she moved in the matter at once to act on my recommendation that we hold a referendum on Sikkim's integration with India. The result went entirely in our favour, and Hope's goose was thus happily cooked!

As a diplomat, Apa was quite extraordinary with his zest for life which seemed to tire everybody but him, and yet which drew everybody to him. In his several diplomatic avatars he has done some incredible things, such as discussing "What is truth?" with the Dalai Lama and

the Panchen Lama in Lhasa, teaching Surya Namaskar exercises to Gina Lolobrigida in Italy and failing to do the same to Sockarno in Indonesia, putting up a Hindu temple in the Arctic Circle in Norway, and being initiated as a Kikuyu tribesman by Jomo Kenyatta. I allowed myself to be overwhelmed by his personality just to savour the experience and was not surprised to discover that sometimes while his body was beside me, his mind was elsewhere operating at another level of consciousness. Truly a most remarkable man who easily transcended the confines of diplomacy and left behind wherever he went unforgettable impressions of goodness, of wanting everything good for everybody!

Fortunately for me, he was also our Political Officer for Bhutan, another independent Himalayan Kingdom with which India had special relations as defined in a Treaty. Unlike Sikkim, we had the best of relations with Bhutan then, which showed great understanding of India's concerns. Its Maharajah, the father of the present incumbent, was a simple person of deep humility and courtesy and always gave me a patient hearing, after which with a radiant smile he would explain his own problem and invite me to solve it! He was a natural born diplomat. His Prime Minister Jigme Dorji was an egregious extrovert and down-to-earth realist, and as chief administrator of Bhutan he set high standards and lived up to them himself, while being hard on shirkers. He had no illusions about China's aims and actions, and thought that we had more than enough illusions than was good for us!

He readily cooperated in opening up Bhutan through a network of north-south and east-west roads to be built by us, but insisted that the roads should not be extended right up to the Chinese border. We were also given every possible assistance in the matter of a military survey of Bhutan and in the provision of training for Bhutan's small armed forces. I was invited to Bhutan in 1968 by the Maharajah to explain India's concerns about Bhutan joining the U.N. After I had set forth our views and what Bhutan may expect in the form of pressures at the UN, he asked me to explain it all to the members of his National Assembly. It led to our sponsoring Bhutan's admission to the UN, which it joined in 1971, and since then it has shown greater understanding of India's interests at the UN than any other of our neighbours. I was struck by the innate honesty and traditional regard for India of most Bhutanese and the deep respect in which they held Nehru and their faith in him. Tibetan refugees had been flowing into India since 1959 straining our resources and the Maharajah offered to accept a few thousand of them for settlement in Bhutan.

Tibet

Chinese armed forces had overrun Tibet in 1959, seized our Trading Stations at Yatung, Gyantse and Shigatsu and laid siege to our Consulate General at Lhasa. Our man there was Chibber, a former captain in the Indian Army, who managed to telephone me in the Ministry (we had our own communications and the Chinese had not yet cut them) and gave a horrifying account of what was happening around him. He had already carried out his instructions to burn the codes and other sensitive material and evacuate non-essential personnel and families to safer places. Surrounded as he was by the Chinese, he had lost touch with the Potala and had no idea about the Dalai Lama's fate. Finally, I enquired if there was any special reason why he had phoned me, and he said, "Sir, the Chinese have been firing into the Indian compound. Have I your permission to return fire?"

"With what do you propose to do so?"

"Sir, with my shot gun and revolver."

"You will do nothing of the kind. You are a diplomat. You will negotiate a cease fire with higher Chinese officials and obtain safe conduct for the return of all of you to India."

Poor Chibber was ready for a showdown and might well have gone down fighting, had he not got through to me on the radio telephone. Fortunately, he was able to lead his party safely to India after a few weeks.

Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama was being besieged in his Palace Norbulingka by his own people, some thirty thousand of them, who had erected barricades at every gate to prevent Chinese forces from taking him prisoner, and also to prevent the Dalai Lama from leaving the Palace in response to the Chinese General's invitation to meet him for talks. This was on 10 March 1959 and for a week the crisis continued, the tension mounted and the Tibetan crowds refused to disperse, despite the Dalai Lama's pleas. They were determined to protect the Dalai Lama at any cost, and the Chinese began their preparations to shell the Palace.

On 16 March two heavy mortar shells were fired into the northern gate and it became clear that a bloodbath was inevitable. The Dalai Lama was left with only one option – to leave the Palace and the city of Lhasa at once and flee to India with his family and members of his cabinet. This was done on the night of 18 March, the Dalai Lama discarding his monk's habit for the unlikely uniform of a Tibetan soldier with a fur cap and a rifle on his shoulder. To complete the disguise he

removed his spectacles, without which he had to be gently prodded, pushed and guided. Two days later on 20 March his Palace was a smoking ruin with Chinese soldiers moving from corpse to corpse looking for the body of the living god. Thousands of Tibetans died and monasteries were razed to the ground to appease the wrath of the Chinese General from whom the Dalai Lama had escaped, and thus Tibet came under Chinese occupation.

Throughout its history Tibet possessed the essential attributes of statehood, never ceased to be a separate entity, was never an integral part of any other state, and though subjected to invasions from outside, had always maintained its independence. With the advent of Buddhism, the source of sovereignty came to be vested in the person and position of the Dalai Lama, thereby imparting a non-violent character to governmental authority. However, it became expedient for Tibet to have friendly relations with a State that understood the requirements of its religion and would respond to requests for assistance in the event of external invasions. Thus developed the cho-yon relationship between Tibet and Mongol emperors and the Manchu dynasty. This sui generis arrangement served Tibet in times of peril and finally ceased in 1911 when the Manchu emperor was overthrown. Thereafter, Tibet acquired its own small defence force for its limited requirements and developed relations as an independent State with foreign countries.

For the communist Chinese to interpret the special cho-yon relationship of Tibet with the Manchu rulers of China as conferring on the China of today sovereignty over Tibet is to distort history in order to further nationalist and communist expansionary purposes. The invasion and occupation of Tibet by Chinese forces in the name of "liberating" its people does not make it an integral part of China. The Tibetan people have not freely exercised their right of self-determination, and China's presence in Tibet remains a gross violation of international law. The General Assembly of the UN in its resolution No.1353 of 21 October 1959 and a later resolution of 1961 called for "the cessation of deprivation of the Tibetan people of their right to self-determination". A peaceful solution of the Tibetan question is still possible.

The Dalai Lama crossed into India safely on 31 March 1959 and was met near the border by an official of the Ministry with a telegram from Nehru welcoming him with these words: "We shall be happy to afford the necessary facilities for you and your entourage to reside in India. The people of India who hold you in great veneration will accord their traditional respect to your personage." He was brought in a special

train from Tezpur to Mussoorie, where he stayed for a few months until more satisfactory arrangements could be made. Chinese reaction was one of rage against "imperialists and Indian expansionists" and they claimed that the Dalai Lama had been abducted by Tibetan rebels! The Dalai Lama was followed out of Tibet by some 90,000 Tibetans who sought refuge in India. We granted them asylum and I was given two tasks: (i) find suitable accommodation for the Dalai Lama in the Himalayan foothills away from the popular resorts and far from the madding Press, and (ii) settle the Tibetan refugees in Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and India.

They involved a great deal of travelling about and choosing the right vacant spots for Tibetan settlements, obtaining the permission and cooperation of local authorities, defining various responsibilities including financing, and finding suitable employment for the refugees. The settlement of the Lamas in makeshift monasteries with facilities for weaving, painting, etc., was a little more difficult. Nehru wanted some refugees to be settled in the southern hills, and I was able to set up six new villages for them in the upper reaches of the Cauvery river on the road to Mercara. A year later I accompanied the Dalai Lama to the southern villages and found how quickly the refugees had adapted themselves to local ways and manners. Switzerland and Austria accepted some Tibetan children for their experimental kinderdorfs. On the whole, the refugee settlement ventures proved to be a success, and I think it was largely due to the understanding shown by the Dalai Lama, and the leadership and hope given by him to his own people.

As for a suitable place for the Dalai Lama to reside, I must have toured all over Himachal Pradesh to select two spots—Dalhousie and upper Dharamsala—and he chose the former for his Lamas, and the latter for himself. It was touch and go moving him from Mussoorie, for although he had given his consent, his cabinet known as the Kashag had taken a great liking to Mussoorie and its proximity to Dehra Dun, and disliked Dharamsala as it was too far away. I had arranged a special train to take the entire party from Dehra Dun to Pathankot one morning, and the evening before my Liaison Officer Nair telephoned me the bad news that the Kashag was being difficult and after consulting its oracle had advised the Dalai Lama against the move. This apparently put the Dalai Lama in a tight spot and he sent for Nair and requested him to send me the brief message:

> My Kashag advises against the move to Dharamsala after consulting its oracle. What is your advice?

I pondered over this mysterious message for some ten minutes. It was too late in the evening to consult the Foreign Secretary. I had to decide what to do. I felt the Dalai Lama's message must contain a clue. I realized it was what he did not say that mattered. It seemed that while he was not against the move, he had not yet taken a position on the Kashag's advice, and was leaving the decision to us. And so I telephoned Nair, asked him to give the following reply to the Dalai Lama and then let me know his reaction:

> My oracle advises that the move to Dharamsala must proceed as planned.

Nair delivered my message and reported that the Dalai Lama had a hearty laugh and said, "Now we all go tomorrow to Dharamsala."

Thus they all came to Dharamsala. I preceded the Dalai Lama so as to receive him on arrival and spent the first few days with him. I have met him several times since then in India and abroad in Austria, Switzerland and the USA. As the saying goes, there is a book in every man; in the Dalai Lama there are many books. He has been out of Tibet now for over thirty years, during which time the tribulations of the people of Tibet have increased and assumed various forms. At the same time their spirit remains unbroken, even strengthened by adversity and unremittingly active in the pursuit of freedom and self-determination, despite Chinese military repression. The Dalai Lama used to be assailed by doubts as to whether he had taken the right decision in leaving Tibet. Had he not done so, the situation might well have been much worse politically for Tibet and her people. The Panchen Lama stayed back in Tibet, and his presence there and his influence on China's Tibet policy was insignificant. The Chinese colossus has remained impervious to internal pressures, but it might not ignore forever the opinion and advice of external powers.

By coming out of Tibet the Dalai Lama brought with him to the outside world the face and mind, the religion and culture of his country as well as the cause of the Tibetan people, which otherwise might have perished in the tidal wave of Chinese communism.

Today, thanks to the moderation and compassion of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan question is more widely known and better understood. China has only two options in Tibet and neither is continuance of the present sort of Chinese occupation and control. The two options

are Tibetan rebellion, or a form of Tibetan autonomy with a modern version of the ancient cho-yon relationship. China's strength and stability are such today as to impart to it enough self-assurance to contemplate political concessions without the slightest detriment to her security, and without loss of face. After all, if China can contemplate a relationship with Taiwan that does not harm the social system of either, it has in fact crossed the mental barrier of infantile orthodoxy and should be in a position to solve the Tibetan problem with realism, compassion and wisdom.

I have always felt that the Dalai Lama has been on the right track. Due to his strict religious discipline his mind is unclouded by the stresses of time, circumstance and emotion, and his logic always on a higher plane seems to be addressed to the mind of the other side. The Tibetan question should be examined by the UN in a manner that does not affect the security of China, and at the same time assures the Tibetan people of their national and human rights. But who in the UN will bell the Chinese cat?

I should like to end this part on a personal note. During one of my many meetings with the Dalai Lama, when we invariably discussed the international scene, I was surprised by a curious question put to me by him. I do not know what prompted it, for our discussion was unrelated to it. Perhaps my generally unreligious attitude and manner may have been the cause of the unusual question put by him in Winterthur to me.

DL: Do you believe in the existence of God?
RJ: It depends on the definition of "God". Diplomats generally like to agree on definitions of terms before discussions.
DL: It is impossible to define "God". But it is possible to experience God.
RJ: I have not had that experience. I should like to.

There was an interruption at that point by a beautiful Tibetan child who blundered into our room laughing and looking wondrously happy, and her laughter was contagious. The suddenness of this blissful experience made me wonder. The Dalai Lama dissolved in laughter.

The Sino-Indian Boundary

There is a Chinese proverb which says "Pain is easier to tolerate than itch". We became aware of the Chinese itch when the Sino-Indian boundary dispute moved from the study of maps to incursions across

the border by Chinese forces. In 1957 when I was the Indian representative on the UN Trusteeship Council in New York, I saw in the morning paper one day that Chinese border patrols had intruded into Indian territory and abducted some Indian personnel. That day the Council had on the agenda the question of the credentials of delegations and the custom had been for India to be the first to object to the credentials of the Kuomintang Chinese delegation and propose that China's place should be taken by the representatives of the PRC. The President took up the KMT credentials for approval and turned in my direction expecting me to initiate the debate by opposing them. I kept silent looking studiously into my papers and avoided looking in the direction of the President. No other delegation sought the floor to indicate its opposition, though there were three or four of them. My attitude presented the Council with an unprecedented situation and the Soviet representative asked for and obtained a brief adjournment.

He then came up to me to enquire what I was going to do. I said there had been no change in our policy; I would vote against the KMT credentials and support the seating of the PRC, but I did not see any reason why India should take the initiative every time. The Soviet Union then opposed the credentials of KMT and I did so later. Krishna Menon heard about this, sent for me and asked for an explanation of my untoward behaviour. I told him I had felt a sense of outrage over the border incident and decided to let another delegation take the initiative on Chinese credentials, but I had in no way departed from our policy. Menon said, "I might have done that sort of thing and got away with it. But you are not Krishna Menon!" To which I felt moved to add "Amen", but didn't. I mention this minor incident to underline the importance of not being earnest about other's problems any more than they themselves are. The attitude of being more royalist than the King often displeases the King, apart from being a little absurd.

In the practice of diplomacy one gets so used to standard reactions and how to deal with them that when there is a sudden unexpected departure, one is often at a loss. I had gone to visit Nathu-la on the Sikkim-Tibet boundary with Apa Pant's two children in 1959. There was then no sign of the presence there of either Indian or Chinese frontier guards. The altitude was over 14,000 feet and the ground sloped gently towards the Tibetan side, and in the distance half a kilometre down the hill could be seen some Chinese soldiers. The three of us felt quite light in the head, ran here and there gathering wild flowers and stone pebbles, yelled our heads off and generally behaved as if we had taken leave of our senses. All this cavorting was seen by

the Chinese soldiers through their binoculars. A few days after my return to New Delhi, the Chinese Counsellor called on me to hand over a protest note, which outlined accurately the activities of "three hooligans" at Nathu-la on the very day I had visited the border, and accused them of making threatening gestures against Chinese forces. I identified the hooligans, pleaded guilty to the charge of violating the Chinese border, returned the few pebbles serving as paper weights which I had picked up on the Chinese side, and accepted the protest. There was in fact nothing more to be said. But the Chinese Counsellor had come expecting me to reject the protest, and he had no idea how to react when I accepted it. And so he left in a huff saying he had to obtain further instructions! The history of the Sino-Indian dispute over the boundary is full of such protests over many minor and technical violations, and the purpose of recording them appears to have been to lend only numerical weight to them.

These various violations were really symptoms and consequences of policies pursued by China and India, which were foredoomed by their very nature to lead to a clash of arms along the entire disputed border. When I joined the Ministry in 1959 the situation on the border had become far more serious and tense than was generally assumed at the time. By building the road across Aksai Chin, which falls within the areas claimed by India, without our approval or knowledge, China had virtually abandoned the pursuit of peaceful settlement of the boundary dispute through negotiations. It could not give up the road which was of strategic importance to it, and so it chose to reinforce its claim to the road by pushing southward as far as possible towards Ladakh in order to establish its line of control with a network of minor roads and a string of posts on the ground manned by its frontier guards. The scale of its encroachment into Indian territory was massive and was presumably intended to strengthen its hands at the negotiating table, especially as Aksai Chin was uninhabited and never had a single Indian administrative or police post. It must have seemed a no-man's land to the marauding Chinese.

It was incredibly stupid of us to have laid claim to Aksai Chin on the basis of the boundary shown in some maps of the previous British Indian Government and not followed it up immediately by establishing on the ground Indian posts there, more particularly because we had known since 1950 that the Chinese Government was sending out its armed patrols to explore its own boundaries with countries in the Indian subcontinent. China apparently had no respect for lines unilaterally drawn on maps by the British imperial power, and was

determined to find out for itself the extent of actual and effective administrative control exercised by the newly independent States on the territories claimed by them. Where such control was absent, China felt free to site its own posts, build roads etc. and claim the areas thus brought under its occupation. I had come across Chinese depredations in the far north of Burma in 1950 and reported them to our Government with a warning to expect similar developments on our borders. But we had preferred the bliss of ignorance until the Chinese road across Aksai Chin suddenly materialized in September 1957 when its completion was announced by the Chinese Press and we sent our patrols in the summer of 1958 to verify it!

We could do nothing about the road which was strongly defended and in Chinese use. However, we felt obliged to react by pushing forward north as far as the Chinese posts and setting up our own posts within sight and sound of them. This action-reaction process resulted in two control lines crossing each other at several points and in hostile confrontation, and sooner than later there were clashes between them. Both lines of control were untenable, and the lines could be evened out only through hostilities. The advantage of terrain, lines of communication and proximity to bases lay with the Chinese. Our posts were outnumbered, outgunned, sited in positions with few communications and little contact with such bases as we had. If the Chinese were to attack them, they would have had to go down fighting, as they could not be supported or supplied with essential requirements. Our forward presence was no more than a formality and intended as a preventive measure against further Chinese advances. The instructions to our posts and patrols were to avoid any clash with the Chinese, unless it became necessary in self-defence.

This was our "forward policy", and disagreements developed over it in 1959 between me and Sumal Sinha, the Desk Officer for China, who was a redoubtable China expert. He had a brilliant mind and a remarkable capacity for expressing his opinions with precision and clarity. In essence, his views were that the movements of our forces and the location of our military posts within the territory claimed by us were perfectly legal and proper, and we should go forward, regardless of Chinese protests and threats. My views were not so simplistic. I fully shared Sinha's view of the legality of our forward movement, but I had grave doubts as to whether legality alone was enough to sustain it. Chinese legality was being sustained by superior military power. I argued that on the ground every circumstance was to our disadvantage and our posts were exposed to humiliating defeat in the event of

hostilities. Such a policy was foolhardy and if its military weaknesses could not be effectively rectified, we should move quickly towards intensification of diplomatic talks. Our two opinions were put up to Dutt, the Foreign Secretary.

He supported Sinha's position and in marking the file to Nehru he drew particular attention to my opinion, which he thought worthy of notice. Initially, Nehru did not express any views and suggested that Dutt convene a meeting with the Army brass to clear up the points raised by me. At that meeting, attended by Generals Thimayya, Sen and Kaul, both Sinha and I were called upon to state our respective cases, which we did. Thimayya and Sen shared the view that the military situation was hopelessly against us, but Kaul expressed confidence that our posts could be supplied, reinforced and sustained in the event of clashes. Dutt reported all this to Nehru, who passed the file to Krishna Menon. Then ensued a meeting in Menon's room with the same dramatis personae and the result was the same. Menon was in a foul mood and turning towards me said, "You have started all this. What have you to say now?" I replied to this effect: "Sir, a political problem has become a military problem. It should be reversed, now that there is a difference of opinion as to whether we can sustain the forward policy militarily." Menon chucked the file towards Dutt saying he would speak to Nehru about it.

That was the end of my involvement in this matter, and I do not know what further discussions took place. It seems that the forward policy was maintained, but bearing in mind operational difficulties, Nehru ordered that rear and intermediate bases should be established and major concentrations of forces sited in convenient places for maintenance of forward posts so as to strengthen our overall military position. Unfortunately, these bases could not be established in time and within available resources; evidently it would have taken years to build them and the Chinese were clearly not going to wait until then.

However, Nehru made a last-minute attempt to revive the diplomatic alternative by inviting Chou En-lai to New Delhi and the meeting took place in April 1960. I was one of the members of the Indian delegation, and each day's meeting brought worse news than that of the day before. Nehru's position was that the boundary was well-known and firmly delimited and had been peaceful until a few years ago when the Chinese moved into traditional Indian territory. Chou's view was that the two sides should maintain their present positions, i.e., lines of control, put forward no territorial claims and allow joint committees to define the boundary. There was no meeting

of minds, no basis for negotiations, no principles to govern negotiations and no agreed objectives. The meeting need not have taken place, and in any case there should have been adequate advance preparations for it. To avoid total failure the two Prime Ministers asked their officials jointly to examine the available evidence about the border, and agreed to avert clashes between the two sides.

It was a sad end and a wasted opportunity. It should have resulted in a mandate for continuous political level dialogue, and not meetings of officials to evaluate evidence at that late stage. I had the feeling that the iron logic of the forward policy would take its inexorable toll. The manner in which the boundary dispute was mishandled by these two States that had recently emerged from imperialist rule is a notable example of their inexperience in diplomacy. Differences in perceptions and interpretations of treaties, agreements, tradition, custom, history and geography were sharpened by the ideological divide, and increased the levels of mutual suspicion and distrust. It was the sort of situation in which traditional diplomatic methods would have been ideal for preparing the way for a political solution. Instead both sides went public with their views and arguments and felt committed to them. Their positions were based, ironically enough, on their imperialist predecessors' actions, now consecrated as national heritages. Unilateral action of any kind by one in areas claimed by the other was clearly ill-advised without mutual agreement. What complicated the issue further was that the line of 1899 proposed by the British Minister to the Chinese Emperor divided Aksai Chin in two parts, one falling within British India and the other within China, both parts being known by the same name of Aksai Chin! The Chinese road is within Chinese Aksai Chin according to the line of 1899. Any solution to the boundary dispute would have to take into account both the 1899 line in the western sector and the 1914 line in the eastern sector.

My term in the Ministry was drawing to a close and I was wondering if I could wangle a year's extended posting at home, when Foreign Secretary Dutt who was packing to go to Moscow as our Ambassador sent for me, and said words to this effect:

> Look, you are due to move out soon. I should like you to join me in Moscow as my No. 2. Would you like that? The alternative is to go to Tanganyika as India's first High Commissioner. It seems Nyerere specially asked for you during Indira Gandhi's visit to attend Tanganyika's independence celebrations.

Though taken completely by surprise, it was easy enough for me to decide in favour of Moscow, a decision which my wife heartily endorsed. I felt that if I was to be any use as a diplomat, I must have the Moscow experience and I was lucky to be offered it. And so we began our lessons in Russian.

6.

TO THE SOVIET UNION

Towards the end of August 1962 we arrived in Moscow with the usual personal baggage of Western-inspired prejudices and preconceptions about the Soviet Union and the Russian people. To exorcise myself of these ready-made influences, I had been dipping into Russian history and found it immensely fascinating, for it revealed a world carefully concealed by the circumstances of British schooling, except for Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Chekov. I now learned about sixth-century settlements of Slavonic tribes on the banks of great rivers and in the shelter of deep forests, and of Vikings who came down the rivers to trade and provided a princely family for the Kievsky principality. I was enchanted by the story of Prince Vladimir Svyetoslav who shopped around for a religion for his pagan subjects and after choosing the eastern orthodox Christianity of Byzantium, marched the entire population of Kiev one fine day in the spring of AD 988 into the Dneiper river, from which self-immersion they emerged baptized Christians!

I read also about the sacking of Kiev in 1240 by the Mongol-Tartar force of Batu Khan, the grandson of Chengis, and the subsequent growth of Moscow as the unifying centre of Russian princely power, which defeated the Tartars in 1380 in a great battle at Kulikovo. The end of the brutal rule of Ivan the Terrible in 1584 was followed by the "Time of Trouble", when one community after another rose up against the rest and there was great disunity, and the Poles established themselves in the Kremlin. Eventually, it was the Russian church that organized a national coalition to drive the Poles out of Moscow and set up a member of the Romanov family in 1613 as the Czar. That was the last dynasty, and it was terminated three centuries later by the revolution. The Romanovs had alienated the masses by tying them down to the soil as serfs of the aristocracy, which tended to separate itself from the Russian people and intermarried with European nobility, especially after Peter the Great opened the doors wide to western influences.

A Moscow-bound diplomat's education is incomplete without a grounding in the origin and growth of the revolution that was said "to have shaken the world" in 1917. It all began with a heavily bearded, ponderous, nineteenth-century German Jew, Karl Marx (1818-1883). He spent many years in the British Museum in London ploughing his way through British Parliamentary reports on corrective legislation to remedy the evils of early British industrial society, and wrote in German his magnum opus *Das Kapital* in 1867. I tried in the days of my youthful enthusiasm to read this impressive book but failed to complete the task, having been overcome by the Germanic profundity of theoretical conclusions based on an impenetrable mass of confusing details. However, in later years I gathered that the gist of his prophecy was that the evils of the industrial capitalism he had known were incurable by any means other than revolutionary upheaval. The profit motive would drive his industrialists to such depths of exploitation of labour as would create an explosive situation, in which the violent overthrow of the social system would become inevitable. His theory of the inevitability of revolution sprang from the industrial societies of Western Europe, but it had almost nothing to say about what should follow the revolution, beyond the prediction that the State would wither away and man would work according to his ability and consume according to his needs.

I had to go to Moscow to find out how irrelevant Marx and his theories were for the Soviet revolution, and how completely Lenin and his theories had replaced them. The total domination of Lenin over everything in the Soviet Union had to be seen to be believed. As a young lawyer he absorbed Marxism and wrote extensively applying it to Russian problems and the realities of Russian life, his main theme being that the proletariat in industrial towns should be the vanguard in the revolutionary struggle against Czarist imperialism. Meanwhile, his scheme was to gain political control of the social democratic movement, which had split into various factions and interest groups. Lenin's activities and writings earned him a few years in prison and some more time in exile in Siberia. When he came out of exile in 1900, he reverted to all his former activities and made several visits illegally to Switzerland, London and Western Europe, where due to Czarist repression many socialist leaders had set up their factional headquarters to continue their political activities both outside and covertly inside Russia.

Lenin was a revolutionary par excellence, who seized every opportunity and used whatever means were available to secure control of a given situation or organization. Persuasive in public speaking, forceful

in debate and shrewd in his tactics, his main aim was to forge unity among the factions and bring them under the control of a centrally directed organization which he could then dominate. He was not always successful, but at the "Unification Congress" at Brussels in 1903 he obtained a small majority, because of the walkout of some delegates and the abstention of others, and promptly assumed for his group the psychologically advantageous name of Bolsheviks or majority-ites. He stuck to this appellation for his group, despite being often in the minority, and made good use of it by always claiming to speak on behalf of the majority!

Meanwhile, inside Russia the industrial revolution forged ahead and produced a strong proletariat that demanded liberal reforms. Political activity was strictly controlled, and unemployed peasantry drifted to the towns swelling the ranks of the disgruntled proletariat. And, to add to the troubles of the monarchy, Japan attacked Russia in 1904. War broke out, and Russia's defeat was exploited by Lenin and his group to further their own plans for the overthrow of the Czarist regime. More unification congresses were held in London and Stockholm in which Lenin managed to maintain his majority. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914 the situation inside Russia rapidly deteriorated, and on 11 March 1917 the President of the Duma or Parliament warned the Czar in these terms: "The capital is in a state of anarchy. The government is paralysed. Food and fuel supplies are completely disorganized. The transport service has broken down. Public discontent is general and on the increase. There is wild shooting in the streets. Troops are firing at each other. A new government should be formed." The Czar's answer was: "Dissolve the Duma"!

Attempts were made to defy the Czar's decree of dissolution, and, significantly enough, as foreseen by Lenin, in the vanguard were workers' representatives and also those of many regiments of the army. They together formed the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and became the most important political body in Russia. The Czar was forced to abdicate, and a bourgeois Provisional Government came into being. Under pressure from the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers it declared political amnesty for those abroad or exiled in Siberia. Lenin and his comrades then returned at once to Russia. Germany came to his aid by giving him a special train across Germany to Sweden and Finland, evidently because of the Bolshevik opposition to the war and desire for peace. Thus Lenin came back to Petrograd after fourteen years on 16 April 1917.

The first thing he did was to oppose the Provisional Government,

and support the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which was the real source of revolutionary power. He then renamed his own faction as "the Communist Party", and called for immediate peace, bread and land, which had an instant appeal for the impatient soldiers, workers and peasants. The Provisional Government ordered his arrest in July. Lenin escaped to Finland but continued to lead his party with exhortation and tactical advice. Toward the end of October he returned secretly to Petrograd, where Trotsky had organized under his leadership a Revolutionary Military Committee for the takeover. On November 7 Lenin's force struck, quickly taking over the Palace and the administration buildings, and arrested the members of the Provisional Government.

Lenin thus assumed power, never again to lose it. He replaced the goal of democracy by the practice of dictatorship, issued decree after decree for implementing his revolutionary programme, and moved the capital to Moscow. He withdrew Russia out of the war by signing a separate Peace Treaty with Germany, and that provoked joint intervention by Japan, France, Great Britain and the USA. It took Lenin some three years to clear the interventionists from Russia. Lenin survived an attempt on his life in 1918; later in 1922 he suffered two strokes and died at the beginning of 1924 after a life of single-minded dedication, unusual daring and incredible luck.

Whereas Marx did not conceive of a blueprint for building a post-revolution social system, Lenin improvised at will with great facility and with no more than due regard for theory. He first nationalized the banks and later the sugar and oil industries, established workers' control in the factories and state control over all enterprises with more than ten employees, made a state monopoly of foreign trade, banned internal private trade, curbed the press and made a worker's vote equal to that of five peasants! He also set up a Special Commission for Repression of Counter Revolution which was given powers of summary arrest, trial and execution, and it came to be known as the "Red Terror". The Czar and his family, the bourgeoisie, the middle class and the well-to-do peasants fell victims to it. Revolutionary enthusiasm and its excesses brought on an all-encompassing economic catastrophe. Strikes, peasant revolts, soldiers' mutinies and famine in the Ukraine followed.

Lenin responded with repression on the one hand and, on the other, a "new economic policy" which he described candidly as a type of "state capitalism". The state retained control of basic industries, transportation and foreign trade but agriculture and small industry were returned

to private enterprise, and economic concessions were granted to foreigners. The new policy was approved by the Tenth Congress in 1921. It was a demonstration of Lenin's ideological flexibility and total control over the Communist Party, which emerged as an effective instrument of his supreme power. It certainly eased the immediate economic crisis and began a gradual and general restoration of production, which continued for over four years after Lenin's death.

Lenin seems to have thought of everything to consolidate the gains of the revolution and to stabilize and strengthen his country, except to lay down the procedure for succession of Soviet leadership. In his "political testament" he ruled out both Trotsky and Stalin, the former because of his incurable predilection for administrative matters, and the latter because of his unappeasable appetite for power and also because of his rudeness. Nevertheless, Stalin succeeded him by making one alliance after another in order to isolate his rivals, whom he then destroyed one by one, and by 1929 he had become the undisputed leader in the Soviet Union.

The Stalin era was characterized by rapid industrialization and ruthless collectivization of agriculture on the one hand, and minimal personal consumption, forced labour for subsistence rations and wholesale displacement of populations on the other. Prisoners were used in the construction of railways and motor roadways, in mining and canal projects. Estimates of political prisoners in labour camps ran up to 15 million persons. The cost in human lives and material terms was shocking, but the plans achieved their main purpose of building the essentials of an economic infrastructure. Political power rested on four pillars: the leadership of the Communist Party, the bureaucracy of the government, the armed forces and the political police. Stalin's principal instrument of internal power was the political police, which he used to terrorize the masses as well as to manipulate and control the other three branches. He will be remembered for his show trials, spectacular purges and liquidation of every conceivable rival and so-called traitors to the Party, including the flower of the Red Army. Six Indian communists in the Soviet Union were reported missing in the 1930s and during my term in Moscow I must have embarrassed the Soviet Foreign Ministry by seeking information about their fate for their relatives back home. This I used to do at various levels for the sheer devilry of it; needless to say I had no instructions from my Government to do so!

Stalin's internal policy of "socialism in one country" first (i.e. in the USSR) had its counterpart in foreign policy in the slogan "the menace

of capitalist encirclement". A posture of political hostility to the West was maintained until Hitler's rise to power in Germany. Stalin then sounded the British and French Governments about forming a common front against Germany, but despite prolonged half-hearted diplomatic negotiations, they signed the Munich agreement in 1938 to appease Hitler! Thereafter Stalin explored possibilities of a deal with Hitler himself and it resulted in the 1939 Non-Aggression Pact, whose secret protocol divided their spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, bringing within the Soviet Union's sphere Eastern Poland and the three Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and giving it also a primary ill-defined interest in South-eastern Europe. Hitler's invasion of Poland followed shortly afterwards leading to declaration of war by Great Britain and France. According to German documents captured by Allied Forces, Hitler had tried to interest Stalin in the division of the British Empire by offering him "territories in the direction of the Indian Ocean including India", but Stalin modestly defined the centre of Soviet aspirations "as the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf". Nothing came of all this, for the British did not oblige him by losing the war. Hitler then turned eastwards in June 1941 to try to crush the USSR.

Germany's initial military successes brought its forces to the gates of Leningrad, Moscow, and as far east as Stalingrad on the Volga. Whatever the truth may be about Stalin's own war record, (and the awful truth is being revealed gradually as it were "through the glass darkly") it then appeared to the outside world that he was a heroic figure rallying his people against the heaviest of odds ever faced by his country. From the areas threatened by or lost to the enemy he transplanted entire industrial enterprises and large warplants with the workers and the machines to the Urals, Kazakistan, Central Asia and Western Siberia. He invoked the names of past Russian heroes, writers, poets, etc., and appealed to the national patriotism of the people to defeat the German invader. He signed a Treaty of Mutual Assistance with the British Government and the Lend Lease Agreement with the USA. Furthermore, he abolished the institution of political commissars in the Red Army and restored a single professional military command. And, as a concession to the West, he dissolved the Communist International; it was a timely gesture. The war ended in victory for the USSR but the losses were staggering including the loss of some 20 million lives.

Differences over the distribution of the spoils of war, conflicts of interests and ideological antagonisms contributed to the outbreak of

the cold war and the onset of the arms race between the USA and the USSR. In the early years of the cold war the many crises that developed were essentially trials of strength designed to upset the status quo, and when they failed to achieve their aims, the consolidation of the status quo assumed the form of two hostile military alliances in a posture of armed mutual deterrence. But the division of Germany and the bizarre situation of West Berlin as a Western enclave inside the socialist world constituted the main elements for instability. Stalin and his successor from time to time exploited the pressure points over Berlin.

We arrived in Moscow in the wake of the 1961 Berlin crisis, when Khrushchev was at the top of his inimitable blustering form. It was an uncommon arrival for us by the Red Arrow, the overnight train from Leningrad where we had been deposited the day before by the Russian steamer that brought us from London. In those timeless days we travelled from one post to another by sea reviving during the voyage our spent forces, recharging our batteries and preparing ourselves for the new diplomatic experience to come. It was a civilized way of making the transition from the familiar past to the unknown future. Thus refreshed, relaxed and ready, we reached Moscow to find no reception party from our Embassy at the railway station! The hour was early morning well before opening time, and my telephone call to the Embassy failed to disturb the slumbers of our security guard. With some difficulty we engaged a taxi with a pick-up for the luggage and arrived at the Embassy gates, much to the consternation of our Head of Chancery, Naren Jain, who was expecting us a day later. The only person evidently expecting us was the Russian militiaman at the gate, who had got the information from his own authorities, for he gave us a smart knowing salute. Jain, a born linguist, had everything quickly under control and whisked us off to his apartment, also in the Embassy compound facing ours, and gave us a good Indian breakfast before breaking the bad news.

It was that Ambassador Dutt would be returning to India almost at once and for good. His son who had been vacationing in Moscow had died suddenly and his death had dealt a cruel inconsolable blow to Dutt, who had lost his wife not long before, and I was to be put in charge of the Embassy until the next Ambassador's arrival. The prospect was certainly unnerving, and Dutt's briefing of what lay ahead in the immediate future made it worse.

The eastern sector of our boundary with China had been relatively quiet until 8 September 1962, when we received reports that a Chinese

force had advanced down Thag La ridge and surrounded the forward Indian post at Dhola. India then ordered some additional troops to proceed to the relief of Dhola post and to push the Chinese north of Thag La ridge. The Chinese were entrenched in superior numbers and showed no signs of withdrawing. Everything pointed to a clash of arms, and the first shooting occurred on 20 September. I was under instructions to keep the Soviet Foreign Ministry informed of developments on the border and I came to be a familiar and frequent visitor at the South Asia Department. Interest in our problem began to increase on the Soviet side after 10 October, when there was a pitched battle between Chinese and Indian soldiers in the Thag La area. On 12 October Prime Minister Nehru was reported by the Indian Press and Radio to have stated that he had ordered the Army to "throw out" the Chinese invaders. The fateful day was 20 October when the Chinese armed forces, evidently after extensive advance preparations, launched massive attacks along the entire border in the eastern sector and made quick advances deep into Indian territory.

I could obtain nothing like diplomatic support from the Soviet Government, although there was much public sympathy for India. In any case, I was at a great disadvantage where information was concerned, for what I received from my own Ministry was meagre and quite inadequate for providing answers to the many questions raised by the Soviet Foreign Ministry. In such situations the diplomat on the spot, namely, the Soviet Ambassador in India is usually better informed, and he was the principal source of information for his Government. The official Soviet reaction I got was that we should avoid the danger-filled path of engaging in a war and resort to further negotiations. *Pravda* in its issue of 25 October blamed "reactionary circles inside India", and drew an inexplicable distinction between "fraternal relations with China and friendly relations with India". It was not clear whether this distinction, which arose from obvious differences in relationships, had any particular "friendly" significance at that time, or it involved a change in the declaration of neutrality contained in the Tass communiqué of 6 September 1959 in favour of "fraternal" solidarity. I thought at the time (25 October) that the Soviet Union could say or do nothing to upset the Chinese, because it was fully extended in dealing with the crisis created by its missiles in Cuba.

The world got to know of this crisis on 22 October, although USA's intelligence had discovered the presence of the missiles a week earlier on 14 October. It was interesting that when the US Ambassador Foy Kohler met Khrushchev earlier in October, he should have been

informed that action on Berlin was being suspended and that what the Soviet Union was building in Havana was a fishing port and not something else! China could not have been unaware of what was happening in Cuba then, and there were many diplomats in Moscow including me, who had felt that the Chinese attack on India of 20 October had been timed to coincide with developments over Cuba. We had been expecting it since 10 October, if not earlier, and the Chinese could certainly have delayed it beyond 20 October. It was hard to believe that it was just pure chance that the attack came on 20 October, or that its timing had relation only to local factors which were by no means of a compelling character. It has been my view that the choice of the date for the attack was political, as indeed was the date for the Chinese cease fire on 21 November, the day following the lifting of the US naval blockade of Cuba. Mr. Khrushchev was able to receive me only on 28 October, two hours after he had signed the second letter to President Kennedy and felt confident that the de-escalation of the Cuban crisis had begun. In reply to my question as to what particular event had been helpful during the days of eyeball to eyeball confrontation, he said it was the UN Secretary-General U Thant's offer of good offices supported by non-aligned countries. Regrettably, he was not in a position to help India in any way over the conflict with China, except to advise a negotiated settlement.

There was a good deal of sympathy for India at all levels in Moscow, and I had no doubt that the Russians as a people had the friendliest of feelings for India and were uncomfortable that the Cuban complication should have embarrassed and inhibited them from coming out openly against Chinese adventurism. Sino-Soviet relations had taken a turn for the worse in June 1959 when the USSR formally abrogated its aid to China in the nuclear field, and their polemics under cover of ideological differences became public in April 1960. This signalled more than a sea change in their relations and was sustained by deep roots of historical hostility, ideological rivalry for leadership and struggle for spheres of influence. And in Russian eyes China appeared to be "striving to bring the USSR and the USA into nuclear conflict, while sitting on the fence and watching two tigers fight". The Cuban confrontation between the USSR and the USA was the sort of providential opportunity that Mao Tse Tung had hoped for, and he seized it with characteristic alacrity to further China's special interests on the Sino-Indian frontier.

The timing of China's attack on India was such as to take advantage of the preoccupation of both the USA and the USSR in their own crisis,

for at any other time China would have felt politically obliged to restrict her military action to destroying only the Indian posts on Thag La ridge, to which it had objected. China's unilateral cease fire also came in time to prevent a widening of the conflict, involving as it would have the USA and to a lesser extent the USSR. With its on-going quarrel with the Soviet Union, an Indo-US military alliance in 1962 would have been a death blow to China's vaulting ambitions. Khrushchev apparently saw through the Chinese game and sought to deprive the Chinese unilateral withdrawal of any virtue with his sarcastic comment: "Why did you go so far forward if only to withdraw?" The lesson that India learned was very different from the one that China had wanted to teach her. China had gained nothing by revealing the face of an aggressor. Indo-US and Indo-USSR relations began to improve, and the most significant outcome was the birth of detente in US-Soviet relations which lasted until 1980. Of one thing I was sure then and it was that Khrushchev would want to take Indo-Soviet cooperation to a new high level and to strengthen India's military capabilities.

It was left to Ambassador T.N. Kaul (Dutt's successor) to develop all-round Indo-Soviet relations with the willing and eager support of Khrushchev. Kaul arrived in Moscow on 3 November 1962 much to my relief, and on the way from the airport to the Embassy he outlined to me in detail what he hoped to achieve. I was astounded by the sheer breadth of his exposition, to which he had evidently given a great deal of thought based on his previous experience in Moscow, his briefing by Prime Minister Nehru and his own assessment of world trends. We spent the next few weeks arranging meetings for him at all levels, from the political and military to the social and cultural, and generally trying hard to keep pace with him. He turned out to be a veritable human dynamo fuelled by some form of internal atomic fusion, and while I have seen his body at rest sometimes, his mind was always a restless seething cauldron of ideas and initiatives. His practice of diplomacy was non-traditional without much regard for protocol, and I find it difficult to categorize it. Essentially, his style reflected his own personality—charismatic, vibrant, non-conformist, flexible, pragmatic, articulate, warm and friendly. He devoured books by the dozen, demolished files at sight and seemed to have plenty of time for fun and games too, and he brought to the Embassy a new and rare spirit of hope and confidence. Suddenly things were looking up inside the Embassy compound; we were all of us—officers and staff—mowing the lawn, trimming the hedges, playing ping pong, badminton, volley ball and squash, ladies and children also participating in the games. In the

winter he would organize cross country ski-ing and ice skating parties and in the summer picnics on the river and in the woods. The Embassy became a happy collective family.

He reorganized the methods of our work by delegating powers of decision-making on specific questions to different levels, retaining for himself an overall supervisory role and taking a special interest in Press and publicity matters. This arrangement left him with adequate time for developing contacts with the Soviet side, for travelling in the country and for sorting out problems at his level. His conception and execution were models of achievement, and his contacts with the Soviets increased so rapidly that other Ambassadors envied him and sought his views and reactions on various issues and events. Where my own work was concerned, Kaul insisted that everything that went to him should go through me for my observations, and while this increased my workload, it was the right way for his deputy to function. Thus I found myself, among other things, dealing with all military negotiations assisted by the different attachés, and it brought me in direct contact with the various wings of the Soviet armed forces. Had this work of diplomatic negotiation been left to the different Service Attachés, there would have been absence of coordination on our side to our detriment, whereas on the Soviet side such coordination existed. Kaul rightly saw the need for it and made me our chief negotiator with full powers, and for my part I requested him to intervene when it became necessary to raise negotiations to the highest political level. This system worked very well and secured the best results in our negotiations, although in the beginning the Service Attachés understandably jibbed at it. Kaul had a way with him in instilling discipline and morale in the staff, and his stern facade was often an assumed mask to protect his generous and compassionate heart. He encouraged free and open discussion, tolerated differences and made everyone feel a sense of participation in our work as a whole. It is not my intention to dwell on him at length, for he has told his story in his books, but the story of my stay in Moscow would be barren without references to him.

I stayed in Moscow until the end of 1966, for a little over four years, and according to the Embassy accountant I was charge d'affaires for 387 days in all! During my term there had been three Ambassadors —S. Dutt, Tikki Kaul and Kewal Singh. We picked up enough Russian to remain afloat, and our younger daughter attended a Russian school for a year. My wife was lucky to paint with the Russian traditionalist painter Ilya Glazunov and to join the Surikov Academy of Fine Arts. We got to know a fairly large circle of Russians through Friendship and

other Societies and were on visiting terms with a few families. We travelled a good bit in the country and were enchanted by its forests, rivers and churches of which no two were the same. Music, ballet and folk dances never ceased to enthrall us. Above all, we were much impressed by the Russian people—their simplicity, sense of humour, sentimentality and deep love of the motherland; their phenomenal sacrifices in war, their creativity and artistry, and their generous impulses and immortal longings for peace. As Indians we were received warmly in every part of Russia and that certainly made life pleasurable for us.

I visited a collective farm once, spoke to the farmers about my country and people, how it is governed, etc., and concluded by putting the following questions to them:

Q. Whom do you like better—Stalin or Khrushchev? and Why?
A. (by an old farmer) Stalin, because he spoke to the people once a year and he kept the prices down!
Q. What about Khrushchev?
A. He is all right. He is like any of us.
Q. What do you think of the multiparty system for your country?
A. (by a young man) Not for us. One party is bad enough!

I was asked in turn obviously by a member of the party in the farm, as to why no revolution had taken place in India despite its poverty, illiteracy, etc. My reply began with the words "You should ask the Indian Communist Party to explain why"; but I could not proceed further because of the general outburst of laughter that followed, and someone else then changed the subject. We had lunch with them and there were more questions about Nehru, his daughter, Raj Kapoor, my family, etc. It was a good-humoured memorable encounter with the sturdy people of the soil, who saw us off in the evening loaded with gifts of fruits, vegetables and eggs. Each farmer had his own private plot of land where he grew what he liked, tended his poultry, pigs and fruit trees, and was free to sell his produce in the nearest market at the going rates and keep his income. Their common complaint was that their children after schooling went away to the towns in search of work, and very few opted to stay and work in the farm. They all looked well-fed, clothed and housed and seemed to be in the pink of health.

The Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs is housed on the Ring Road in a gothic architectural wonder of the Stalinist period, which despite its intimidating exterior and hideous internal decor contained within it

a very competent and professional corps of Soviet diplomats under the astute leadership of Andrei Gromyko. I met Gromyko during the early days of the Sino-Indian war to brief him about developments on the border. I had a large-scale map with me and he was curious and most interested in getting to learn more from map-reading. For some persons such exercises can be absorbing, for others merely exhausting, but Gromyko was brimming with questions about the terrain, the gradients, the climatic conditions, the peoples living there, the origins of the lines of control and the claim lines, and the rationale of the forward policy. From his reactions to my answers I gathered that he had a good grasp of the legal merits and drawbacks of the MacMahon line, but was more than a little surprised by our general complacency and consequent lack of activity on the western sector until we were confronted with the fait accompli of the Chinese-built road in Aksai Chin.

At any rate, his questioning of the forward policy took me by surprise and quite out of my depth, for he wanted to know whether we were prepared for sustaining the forward policy, and what we intended doing in certain hypothetical situations of a military-cum-political nature that could arise as a result of the alternating Chinese action/Indian reaction process. I confessed that I could not answer for our Government, but for my part I had not thought that far ahead. To which he asked if I played chess, and I said, "Yes, only with my family." He said, "That is not good enough. You must learn chess from a Russian master who will teach you to anticipate your opponent's moves seven steps ahead!" I could not help saying, and I immediately regretted saying it, "I hope for the sake of peace you are doing that now in Cuba", where the crisis was in full flow. Gromyko's mood was grim for a while before he responded: "Yes. We anticipate every possibility." And then tea arrived in a samovar, and the superb diplomat that Gromyko was changed the subject adroitly by claiming that the samovar was a Russian invention and the tea was Georgian. I thanked him for the tea and also for giving the Russian invention a Sanskrit name. He gallantly conceded the point after checking with his learned interpreter that "samovar" was not a Russian word etymologically. Four years later when I left Moscow on transfer, I was given a farewell lunch by Deputy Foreign Minister Firubin who handed over to me Gromyko's present of a stunning Russian samovar!

I was warned by some colleagues in the foreign diplomatic corps to expect the KGB to test me for any weaknesses, and I was naturally on my guard against buxom blonde sirens. But I was taken entirely by

surprise by the nature of the tests chosen for me. One morning at the office I was informed by my Russian staff that a Russian mother and her school-going son had come into our compound and were seeking asylum. I asked my staff how the mother and son were able to get in past the Russian militiaman at the gate, and they didn't know; I told them to escort the couple out of the compound but they refused to leave! I had them brought into my room and their story was that they were Baptist Christians, the son was discriminated at school, the mother was prevented from attending church, their lives were unbearable and so they wanted asylum. The boy would not respond to questions and the mother admitted she had a place to stay and a regular job as well. I told her she would be far more miserable in India not knowing any Indian language and not used to our extreme climate, food, etc. She became alarmed and said she did not want to be sent to India; she wanted asylum in the Embassy compound! I told her it was out of the question to give her asylum in her own country in premises rented from her Government, and I advised her to leave before I reported her presence to the Soviet authorities. Whereupon, her duty done and with a vague smile she marched out of my office with her son in tow!

The next test came soon afterwards. A burly, well-dressed Russian with a bulging brief case, calling himself Secretary General of a Society against violation of human rights and racial discrimination came to meet me at my office. He pulled out a massive petition, containing several pages crammed with signatures, addressed to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru requesting him to take up at the UN the numerous cases mentioned in it about violation of human rights in the USSR. It was a well-drafted petition in English with an intimate knowledge of law, principle and procedure, and I was suitably impressed and said so. The visitor's request was that I should forward it to Pandit Nehru. And he added for good measure, "How could you possibly refuse such a simple request?" I replied that I would not send it by our diplomatic bag, because that would be violation of our agreement with the USSR concerning diplomatic communications. I could, of course, send it by ordinary Soviet mail but I felt sure he would not want the Indian tax-payer to meet the postal expenditure on the extremely heavy package. He was a tough one, this visitor; he would not give up and stayed with me for an hour arguing back and forth, repeating himself endlessly with the sort of stamina that one associated with seasoned Soviet diplomats, and I told him so in sheer admiration. At last he grinned suddenly, gathered up his papers and left with a formal hand-shake. It

seemed to me that there was little point in inflicting on us these routine hangovers from the Stalinist past, and I expressed myself accordingly at one of my visits to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, which claimed to be unaware of them.

Whenever the Soviet Foreign Ministry desired to meet one of us, we were never given advance information of the purpose of the call even if we were to ask for it, and that did not make for quick or efficient despatch of business. I was once sent for and went assuming there would be the usual tour d'horizon with the inevitable tea and lemon in a tall glass, but found myself in a most unpleasant situation. I was received solemnly by the Head of the South Asia Division and informed that our Government was behaving in a manner that was far from friendly. A Russian sailor, Tarasov by name, had stolen some things, jumped from his ship at Calcutta, swum to an American ship in the harbour and been given asylum there. The Soviet Consul General had lodged a complaint to the local police authorities, who thereupon had gone to the American ship, apprehended Tarasov and taken him away for trial. The Soviet Embassy in New Delhi had requested the Indian Government to hand over Tarasov for trial by Soviet authorities, and our Government had expressed its inability to do so as the matter was before the courts.

I was told in effect and with great seriousness that the Soviet Government failed to appreciate the reasons given by the Indian Government. After all the police was Indian and the courts were Indian, and surely they were under the authority and control of the Indian Government, and the Indian Government could order them to give up Tarasov for trial in Moscow. I was expected evidently to produce Tarasov, and as inducement it was recalled for my benefit that not long ago during Ambassador K.P.S. Menon's time an Indian security guard of the Embassy had misbehaved and been arrested, but at our Ambassador's request he had been returned to us. Reciprocity, that iron law of diplomacy, was being invoked, together with the implication that any future misbehaviour of our Indian staff would be dealt with according to Soviet law! It was clear to me that having failed to move our Ministry of External Affairs, I was being pressurized in Moscow with a vague threat of retaliation.

I took great pains to explain the Indian position, the constitutional separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, the commission of the alleged crime by Tarasov in Indian territory, the formal complaint to the local police, their arrest of Tarasov and the inevitable trial by the courts. The Indian Government could not intervene in this

due process of law. Tarasov would have to be tried and sentenced to imprisonment, if convicted; if acquitted, he would be set free. Also, if the charge of theft were to be withdrawn, Tarasov would be at liberty. I saw no parallel between Tarasov's case and Ambassador Menon's security guard, who was a member of the staff of our Embassy. The Soviet official obviously under instructions repeated his arguments, word for word, in response to my exposition and I was constrained to re-state our position. After the third such repetition by both, I exploded as follows:

> Your Excellency, for the third time you have virtually asked my Government to violate its own Constitution, and in persisting in this attitude you have shown great disrespect to my country's Constitution. I have no option but to report this to my Government and seek their reactions. I should now like to return to my Embassy.

The Soviet official requested me to wait for some more minutes and left the room. He returned after 15 minutes and with an air of pious indignation assured me solemnly and repeatedly that he had at no time shown any disrespect to the Indian Constitution! I said simply that I took note of his assurance and left. Nothing more was said of Tarasov. He was tried, found guilty, sent to prison for two years and thereafter he went to London.

But for this one bizarre incident, all our encounters with Soviet officialdom were invariably pleasant and fruitful, reflecting the state of Indo-Soviet relations and the generally relaxed climate of superpower detente that followed the resolution of the crisis in Cuba over missiles. Khrushchev went out of his way to make up to India for his lukewarm posture during the Sino-Indian conflict, and that permeated all levels of our contacts. It was as if Russians wanted to show their friendliness in order to demolish aspersions to the contrary, and what better object on which to lavish their friendship than India, Nehru, Indira and the harmless Indians. About other countries and peoples there could not be the same sort of unreserved posture as towards the large lumbering Indian elephant. Tikki Kaul was quick to sense this change of mood and responded in equal measure, and was able to establish with Khrushchev warm personal rapport.

This general atmosphere was of the greatest help in our negotiations, and the best way to illustrate it is to give a few examples, in which concessions were made solely with regard to the good relations between the two countries. During my talks over the purchase of helicopters I asked for a discount, because of the large number likely to be involved. There were difficulties in interpretation of the term "discount" and in understanding its rationale, owing to the fact that Soviet pricing in those early days did not take this into account. I was told that as the price quoted was the cost price, there could be no discount. And then I put forward the tentative suggestion that having regard to our friendly relations, they might consider gifting one helicopter since we were buying so many of them. My suggestion was received with a sense of relief and with the statement: "That is different from discount. We shall consult with higher political authorities and give you our reply." A few days later I was informed by beaming Soviet officials that my suggestion was acceptable and we would get an extra helicopter free of cost as a token of our friendly relations! My problem thereafter was to get the blinkered bureaucracy of India to accept the gift!

For over a year Air India had been squabbling with Aeroflot over the latter's claims for refund of several lakhs overcharged by the former. Each side had been setting out its own arguments and adhering to its position during the three rounds of talks, and there was no forward movement. The situation had become embarrassing for both sides, and Air India (B.R. Patel was the General Manager then) had come again to Moscow for the fourth round. I was invited to join our side and in fact to lead it in Patel's absence, which I did. It became clear to me that the Soviet arguments were valid and would go against us in any sort of third party arbitration. At the same time our arguments were not without merit; we had not purposely overcharged Aeroflot but owing to a genuine misunderstanding on the part of both, the Soviet side had accepted the charges levied by Air India. Patel agreed and asked me for a way out of the stalemate. I said that if we were to make good the loss, the Soviets would be bound to think that Air India had indulged in overcharging them deliberately and that would not be good for Indo-Soviet relations. On the contrary, if Aeroflot were to leave the talks empty-handed, it would affect the future of the relations between the two airlines. I asked Patel if he would agree to settle the matter on a 50:50 basis and he agreed. At the next round, I made a long-winded statement at the end of which I suggested that we follow the tradition of the merchants of Cracow and resolve the dispute on a fifty-fifty basis, for the alternative was surely an indefinite deadlock that was inconsistent with our friendly relations. The Soviets proposed an adjournment and the following day made an equally lengthy statement and saw nothing but virtue in the equal sharing of the burden that I had proposed!

Krishna Menon, then Minister of Defence, told me before I left for Moscow that I should ask for the licence to produce in India every item that I was told to buy in the USSR. It was sound policy, but naturally it could not possibly apply to a second-hand submarine that I had been asked to purchase. Apparently, for years we had been negotiating with the British Conservative Government the sale of one of their second-hand Oberon class submarines, and the British had been blowing hot and cold at the dangerous prospect of the Indian Navy going under water. When Y.B. Chavan became Defence Minister he broke off the talks with the British and sent me instructions to open talks in Moscow for the purchase of a second-hand Soviet submarine. I failed to convince the Russian Admiral that I was serious; for one thing he could not understand what was meant by "second-hand", and for another, if it was a used submarine we wanted he could not see why, when he was ready to offer us brand new submarines! And if we were worried about the cost, why not take it up with Khrushchev, who would surely gift us one as a symbol of Indo-Soviet friendship! I felt quite small. There was nothing more to be said for second-hand things and I changed the subject and enquired of the Russian Admiral his purely personal opinion of the minimum number of submarines the Indian Navy would need. His answer was 20 and no less. Years later in New York I put the same question to an American Admiral and his reply was 36. I made my report to Chavan and evidently he saw the force of my argumentation against second-hand submarines and instructed me to negotiate the purchase of four new Soviet submarines, which I did.

Most of the negotiations for defence items were held in the State Committee for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries headed by Minister Skachkov, and the talks at my level were with four-star General Sidorevitch and his team. He was a father-figure and an exceptionally fine human being; gentle, courteous, understanding, clear-headed and highly respected, he had about him the air of quiet authority. That he believed in Indo-Soviet friendship was evident, but what was surprising was the fact that he was really fond of India and Indians. He was much impressed by several things about us, that we did not default on agreements, that we made our payments on due dates, that our military trainees were better educated, well-motivated, quick to learn with high performance standards, avoided women and hard liquor, and on their return to India put Soviet equipment to levels of testing beyond levels reached in the Soviet Union. He rated them higher than Chinese, Arab, African and Latin American trainees. The war in Vietnam was then on and Soviet equipment was being tested

and improved there. On his own initiative he would include in the contracts provisions for incorporating in our missiles, radars, tanks, aircraft, etc., the latest refinements without increase in cost.

Once he gave me as his recommendation in regard to some defence industry that 250 Indians be trained over a period of 12 to 15 months, and after consulting our Government I went back to him with a revised Indian estimate of training 150 men for 6 months! He smiled and said, "I know the high intelligence level of Indians and, therefore, I accept your revised view. But you have not taken into account the time spent on learning the Russian language, and you should also keep open the possibility of sending more men for a longer period in the light of actual experience. Incidentally, a few years ago I made a similar recommendation to a Chinese Embassy representative, and he came back a few days later to say his Government had doubled my estimates, because fraternal relationship required us to train more Chinese for longer periods!"

The practice in my time was to sign contracts or agreements for even the smallest quantity of the most minor of spare parts, and delivery depended upon the particular production plan into which our demands could be integrated. There was no such thing as buying off the shelf. There was a particular item that we needed desperately and urgently for our fighter aircraft and General Sidorevitch regretted they were not able to supply it in the time and quantity stipulated by us. However, with the vestige of a smile and twinkle in his eyes he said there was a wizard of a Sardarji with a foundry in Amritsar who could reproduce it and he gave me his name and address. Air Chief P.C.Lal told me later that he found the Sardarji's efforts most satisfactory. On another occasion, an important contract had been inordinately delayed by the Soviet side and I complained somewhat bitterly, and Sidorevitch tipped me off that the papers were buried under other papers on Khrushchev's table! We were then at a Reception in the Kremlin and I requested Ambassador Kaul to take it up with Khrushchev who was standing not far from us. Kaul turned to Marshal Malinovsky and sounded him as to whether it was a good idea to tackle Khrushchev then and there about this matter. The Marshal's reply was classic: "Why not? Not even the Red Army can stop you!" Whereupon Kaul dashed off towards Khrushchev with me in tow and the encounter proved to be highly successful for us. Khrushchev turned to Gromyko and enquired whether they had such energetic and enterprising Ambassadors in their diplomatic service!

Apart from my participation in a variety of negotiations with the Soviet side, I kept track of Soviet involvement in Indo- China. The Geneva Conference on Laos of 1962 was co-chaired by the UK and the USSR, and there were then three parties in Laos – the neutralists under Prince Souvanna Phouma, the leftists under Prince Souvannavong, and the rightists under Phoumi Nosavan – who were partners in the Government. The system set up by the Conference required them to take decisions unanimously, but it turned out to be unworkable in practice. The neutralist Foreign Minister got murdered, and that brought the neutralists and the right wing together, and soon there were hostilities between them and the left wing. The Russians gradually lost their influence over the left wing to the North Vietnamese and the Chinese, and Khrushchev termed the Soviet co-chairmanship in Laos as "a hook on which one hung dead dogs"! The situation in Cambodia was unstable mainly due to the use of its territory by the Vietcong. Sihanouk could not prevent it and the US threat of intervention made him press for an international conference. The Russians supported the idea but the Americans did not. The following year Sihanouk again proposed a conference and while both the USA and the USSR agreed, the Chinese did not want it and so Sihanouk withdrew his proposal. One of the reasons why Cambodian affairs were not taken seriously was the charming waywardness of Prince Sihanouk who changed his mind almost as often as his clothes. Everybody knew that while the diplomatic facade of fruitless discussions was kept up, the intractable and interlinked situations in the three States of Indo-China were going to be decided by force on the ground. In its capacity as co-Chairman the USSR was unable to take any fruitful initiative or influence the North Vietnamese, for the Chinese were then calling the tune and holding up Soviet military supplies to North Vietnam just to emphasize their strategic importance. The Russians were in a delicate and difficult position, for not only was their military aid to North Vietnam subjected to Chinese delays, but they were also unable to protect the North Vietnamese against US bombing. The Chinese, however, were busy fighting to the last Vietnamese!

Sino-Soviet relations, which came under my overview, had been steadily deteriorating since the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, at which Khrushchev launched the de-Stalinization campaign, essentially an attack against the cult of personality. Mao Tse Tung who had ambitions of inheriting the mantle of Stalin as the ideological leader of the world communist movement, considered Khrushchev a "Marxist illiterate". It is probably true that Khrushchev had read less of Marx

than Mao, but he certainly articulated the very real anti-Stalinist feelings among his people and the armed forces, which demanded the vindication of the honour of thousands of officers liquidated by Stalin as "traitors". De-Stalinization shook Soviet society as well as the communist world to its depths leading to the overthrow of Stalinist leadership in some parties and countries, and endangering the future of all other such leaders. It also led to revision of ideas regarding diffusion of ideological authority, independence and equality of communist parties, a new basis for inter-party relationships, and new problems of unity and diversity in the movement. Interpretations based on national experience can cause ideological disputations especially when the movement is action-oriented, and the Sino-Soviet conflict became more than a discussion of philosophical abstractions; it was in fact a crisis of leadership of the world movement. The challenge came from the Chinese, from their bid to make their own nuclear weapon, to assume leadership of Afro-Asian and Latin American parties and to prod revolutions that might escalate into wider conflagrations. The polemics were between proxies – Albania for China and Yugoslavia for the USSR. The real target of Chinese attacks was the Soviet Union, the CPSU and its leaders, and indirectly the state of detente between the USSR and the USA. The polemics came into the open in February 1964 when Mikhail Suslov made a 134-page statement to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU exposing the Chinese cat hiding in the Trotskyite bag! They were stirring days for the faithful, but for me, a non-doctrinnaire diplomat, it was my duty, though a monumental bore, to read the turgid prose of the endless output of ideological bilge by the two sides, and then summarize and comment on this medieval war for the minds of the mediocre. I succeeded in reducing it all to a six-page note in relatively simple English, which ended with the prophecy that the Chinese would have the last million words on behalf of 600 million Albanians! I was thrilled to learn that my note had been "seen and read" by J. Nehru but without comment. How wise of him to refrain from comment on the monomania of the day; it enabled me thereafter to ignore the slanging match between Moscow and Peking.

The era of Khrushchev came to a sudden and entirely unexpected end. No one, not even Khrushchev, excepting the silent conspirators, knew that he had lost the support of the majority in the Central Committee, and that too in a short period of some eight years after reversing the negative consequences of Stalin's rule of thirty years. The salient

features of Khrushchev's ideas, which were supported by the Party, were peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems, communization of the world through economic competition, creation of a socialist commonwealth of equals, the form of revolutionary struggle being decided by the people of each country, development of socialism through different means, autonomy for communist parties, and renunciation of war as an instrument of policy. The Soviet Union had attained qualitative nuclear parity with the USA during his rule and he expected it to deter the USA from "imperialist adventures". Whereas Mao's exaggerated assessment was that the USSR had achieved strategic superiority over the USA, and should therefore "despise the enemy strategically while tactically dealing with it prudently"! Khrushchev, however, felt that the Chinese theory of revolutionary strategy and controlled tactical risks in waging "just" local wars and promoting communist expansion, while Soviet nuclear power held in check the aggressive potential of the USA, was dangerously provocative and would make world war almost inevitable, and was obviously intended to result in the destruction of all except China, according to Mao's arithmetic. Khrushchev's reactions in regard to China's actions in Vietnam, India and Taiwan had been restrained, but he was faulted for aggressive posturing over Berlin and Cuba. I was convinced that Khrushchev had been "testing" President Kennedy over Berlin, and the Cuban crisis was contrived to give the Americans "a taste of how the Russians felt to be so close to enemy missiles". At any rate, Soviet decisions over such major issues as Berlin and Cuba had been taken collectively by the Politbureau, and not individually by Khrushchev. Indeed, during the Cuban episode it was Khrushchev's famous personal letter to Kennedy of 26 October 1962 that contained, with all its emotion and rhetoric, "the beginnings of some accommodation, some agreement", according to Robert Kennedy, the President's brother.

Nikita Khrushchev's sins were in the field of domestic matters rather than foreign affairs, although his enemies did cite China and Cuba among the reasons for his downfall. It is in the area of domestic policy that he had greater freedom of action and he was accused of "subjectivism, arbitrariness and boastfulness". His organizational reform that split the Party apparatus into industrial and agricultural branches, his decentralization of economic management that led to projects being undertaken with insufficient resources, his failure to increase agricultural production and his tendency to freewheel without consulting his colleagues were all held against him. His main achievements in making Soviet society more open and free and in providing better housing,

food, clothing, etc. were overtaken by the revolution of rising expectations, which he was unable to tackle with his wild experimentation in socialist market economy à la Yugoslavia. His boisterous vulgarity made him one with the masses and while this identification did not win him support from the people, it embarrassed the ruling elite and the bureaucracy. Even so, on his 70th birthday in April 1964 he was showered with many honours in the hope he would take the hint and retire. Shortly thereafter, he happened to meet in Moscow our President Radhakrishnan in transit, and the latter told him that he planned to retire soon. Whereupon Khrushchev commented, "It is easy for you to retire, for you are like the British Queen without any power. But I have power. How can I give it up?"

Early in October 1964 Khrushchev took his annual vacation in Sochi by the Black Sea with his family, and, in his absence from Moscow, most foreign Ambassadors (including the Indian) also took their brief vacations, as had been the practice. The American and British Ambassadors however were in Moscow, because they had already taken their vacations as usual in August-September. The Soviet Presidium convened on 12 October under Suslov's chairmanship and authorized Mikoyan to go to Sochi and request Khrushchev to return to Moscow and attend its meeting. Khrushchev did so only to find that he was confronted with a demand from his comrades for his resignation. He launched into a long and bitter tirade seeking to justify his policies and actions but found that he had little support in the Presidium. And so he demanded a decision by the full Central Committee; such a demand had been foreseen and the Central Committee was already in session! It also endorsed the demand for his resignation by an overwhelming majority on 15 October. No foreign diplomat had any inkling of these goings on until the night of 15 October when someone had seen a large portrait of Khrushchev in front of Hotel Moskva being removed. Earlier at the Afghan Embassy Reception the same evening there had been rumours of Khrushchev's fall but no Russian official would confirm it. At the stroke of midnight there was confirmation by Tass in its communique stating that the Plenum of the Central Committee had approved the request of Khrushchev to resign because of his advancing age and the worsening state of his health. Brezhnev was named First Secretary of the Party and Kosygin as Prime Minister.

It was a slick conspiracy with the armed forces and the secret service being a part of it. No tears were shed, except Khrushchev's own – in a last ditch stand at the Central Committee. I knew a Russian whose brother was a full member of the Central Committee and he gave a

blow-by-blow account of Khrushchev's trial and defence. His performance was anything but dignified; it was theatrical, though at times hysterical, and in the end he bowed to the inevitable, unbelieving. There was apparently a good deal of sympathy for him, but it had become clear that the old man was on the way to becoming a bumbling fool who could no longer be entrusted with power. The following day there was a Kremlin Reception for the Cuban President attended by me and my wife, who plied her Russian friends with questions about Khrushchev only to be told that Kosygin would make an excellent Prime Minister! Overnight Khrushchev had been reduced to an Orwellian non-person. The new Soviet leadership was paraded at the Reception as a troika with Brezhnev in the lead, and Kosygin and Podgorny on either side. Gromyko was hovering in the background and I went up to him and enquired about the significance of the change for Indo-Soviet relations. Our Parliament was then in session and questions would be put to our Government there. He went up to Brezhnev first and then the other two joined them in a huddle for a few minutes and Gromyko came back to reassure me that India may expect Indo-Soviet relations to be as strong as ever and to develop even further. I sent this and other information to New Delhi and Foreign Minister Swaran Singh used it to field questions in Parliament.

We remained in Moscow for two more years after Khrushchev and though diplomatic life continued to be the same, it was much duller and sadder. Those who succeeded him were predictable; Podgorny's future lay in cliches, Kosygin's was no more than that of a cold calculating machine, and Brezhnev, the experienced operator, was biding his time aspiring to be the Party oracle second only to Lenin. Many diplomats as well as several Russians felt that Shelepin, then aged 46, had the brains to emerge eventually as the supreme leader, having graduated from Komsomol, headed KGB and become Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of the Central Committee and boss of the Party-State Control Committee. He had his own following in the Party, mainly young Komsomol types, and he posed a threat to Brezhnev. The old guard did not care for him or his independent inquiring mind which brought him into contact with foreign diplomats. I had a nodding acquaintance with him at Receptions, indicated my desire to call on him and was surprised to be given a date. I was even more surprised to be asked by him what I thought of the Soviet Union, and it provided an opportunity to give him my own brash assessment. I said that I felt that Soviet goals for the people were all right but the means used

sometimes seemed all wrong, and wrong means had the habit of distorting and even changing the ends in view. The Soviets had had nearly fifty years' experience of revolution and two wars, and had won them all and had other achievements as well to their credit. With a GNP that was half that of the USA they had rivalled the US military and space programmes and attained strategic parity. The USSR should have developed by now enough self-confidence in its security to withdraw from the arms race, throw open the country's fabulous forests, resorts and churches to tourists and divert more resources to the people's welfare. He smiled and said, "Some Generals and politicians think differently." He questioned me about the relationship between means and ends, but I was reluctant to be drawn into a discussion of philosophical abstractions.

What saddened me more than any other thing was the new leadership's reversal of all the good that Khrushchev had done: the restoration of the Party to its former monolith, and its attacks on a number of artists, writers, poets and even scientists. They put on their own Party Congress, the 23rd, in April 1966; Brezhnev became General Secretary of the Party, a Stalinist title, rather than First Secretary, and directives for the next 5-Year Plan were approved. There was nothing new in the speeches, not a revolutionary spark and nothing to ignite the traditionally somnolent Congress. There was a Russian anecdote about an American spy having penetrated the Congress and the head of the KGB was asked to get him. And he did almost at once, and when asked to explain how, he said, "Lenin taught us our enemy never sleeps, and this was the only one who was awake at the Congress!"

Our relations with the successors of Khrushchev continued along well-established old lines, despite some new international developments. The Chinese seem to plan their coincidences with a political instinct that may have a celestial origin. They timed their attack on India when the USA and the USSR were heading for the nuclear brink, and they ceased fire when the USA lifted its naval blockade of Soviet shipping. And now on the day after the resignation of Khrushchev the Chinese staged their first nuclear explosion intended less to celebrate Khrushchev's fall than to announce the advent of a new star in the nuclear firmament. It galvanized Lal Bahadur Shastri to send his envoys scurrying to Moscow, Washington and the UN in quest of general collective security assurances against nuclear attacks for non-nuclear non-aligned states, which were not given. The USA which had then begun to increase its military involvement in Vietnam found itself with no choice but to go all the way in Vietnam militarily. The USSR

had several choices and it exercised them all, namely, to mend its fences with China, to increase its military supplies to Vietnam, to open talks with the USA about a treaty regime for non-proliferation of nuclear arms, and to wean Pakistan away from both China and the USA. The last objective, as I told Gromyko, may find India confronting a Pakistan with American, Chinese and Soviet weapons! Ayub Khan visited Moscow in April 1965 and left a favourable impression on Soviet leaders. He was followed by Shastri who made a Gandhian impact on Soviet policy-makers.

And then came the Indo-Pakistan war of September 1965 and its cease fire on 20 September. With Anglo-Americans in the dog-house, it was not surprising that the USSR offered its good offices and invited both sides to a conference at Tashkent. The Conference took place from 4 to 10 January 1966 between Ayub Khan and Shastri, with Kosygin playing the unaccustomed role of a midwife. My role was that of note-taker and general factotum. Shastri made it clear in his opening statement that our endeavour was to try to open a new chapter in Indo-Pakistan relations on the basis of respect for territorial integrity and renunciation of force in settling differences. Ayub Khan's theme was a No-War Pact *after* peaceful resolution of disputes between the two countries on a just and honourable basis. If they both meant what they said, and it could not be otherwise, there was no possibility of peaceful resolution of any dispute at Tashkent or elsewhere. In the circumstances, they reaffirmed their general obligations under the UN Charter regarding non-use of force except in self-defence, and peaceful settlement of disputes in a manner that justice was not endangered, and set out their different positions on Jammu and Kashmir. The limited achievements of the Conference were withdrawal of both armies to the positions held before 5 August 1965, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, restoration of diplomatic relations, repatriation of prisoners of war and agreement to consider measures for normalization of relations. There was a good deal of fuss over our hanging on to Haji Pir, because in the political mind in India it had assumed an importance far beyond its real military significance. Pakistan's view was that we should quit Hazi Pir but it would stick to Chhamb, or it should be given, if not Haji Pir, other alternative positions of its choice. One of the alternatives sought by Pakistan was a commanding height that would have made it possible for it within 24 hours to debouch massively into the Srinagar valley! Eventually, under

the principle of both reverting to positions ante bellum Haji Pir was exchanged for Chhamb.

At one stage it seemed that the talks were breaking down over the issue of withdrawals, but I did not sense this possibility. For in my judgement either both sides had to go back to their pre-war positions, or they remained where they were when cease fire was declared, which would have invited cease fire violations in the search for more stable and defensible positions. I had a feeling that ultimately both would settle for the former, as the latter meant resumption of hostilities, and in anticipation I had with me a draft of the final declaration in my room. And in came Inder Malhotra unannounced with all his antennae out on the alert and his nose vigorously sniffing for anything newsworthy. He was smiling in that outrageously knowing fashion that made me feel guilty of hiding something from him, and he asked me outright if that was indeed the case! My wife quickly moved and sat on top of the draft final declaration, while Inder was looking elsewhere at another pile of papers. It took us a long time to get rid of him, with his eyes everywhere, his nose twitching wolfishly and his grey cells working overtime.

I was quartered in the same compound as Shastri but in another building a hundred metres away. We were all happy when the Agreement was signed on the morning of 10 January 1966. Shastri and Ayub Khan seemed to have established a good equation with each other, and the implementation of the Agreement depended on it. Bhutto appeared unhappy; evidently he would have preferred the Conference to fail for his own political reasons, although he was not in favour of resumption of hostilities. Shastri returned to his villa after a farewell function about 10 p.m. and immediately telephoned his residence in New Delhi to let his people know that he was flying back home the following morning. After a short conversation he put the phone down and told us that according to his people, he would be met at the airport by black flag demonstrations for giving up Haji Pir!

He appeared badly shaken by this information and retired to his room. Evidently he could not sleep, for about midnight seeing me at work in his villa he asked me why I was up so late. I said that certain matters had to be cleared up with the Russians that night itself, for they too would leave in the morning. He walked around a bit deep in thought and then went in. I left shortly afterwards for my quarters and had barely got into my pyjamas, when there was a telephone call from Shastri's villa to say that he had had a severe heart attack. I rushed to his villa and found Shastri's own doctor and some Russian specialists trying to revive him in vain. He had passed away quietly into another

dimension beyond recall. His heart had had its own reasons to stop, which our minds could not comprehend. At the height of his achievement he departed plunging the rest of us—Indians, Russians and Pakistanis—in gloom. Ayub Khan, Kosygin and others carried his coffin on their shoulders up to the aircraft waiting to take him on his last journey home, with his delegation and Ambassador Kaul. And then as Ayub Khan was leaving, he came up to me as I was in charge, shook my hand solemnly and said, "What kind of fate is dogging our countries' relations?" I could not find any words to say and remained tongue-tied.

7.

BACK TO THE MINISTRY

It was already four years since we arrived in Moscow, and in those days the term of a posting to Moscow used to be only two years but we had opted for and done two postings in a row. Our next posting was back to Headquarters, which we welcomed, for we could then be with our two daughters during their college graduation. I left Moscow with mixed feelings about the future of Russia and the Russian people, having lived through some historic events and been witness to great debates on some profound issues. One major contradiction in Soviet society, namely, the striking contrast between the achievement of science and the poverty of the daily life of the people, I was convinced, could not be sustained forever under the command system of the economy. Conditions were bound to improve for the people when the military threat receded. Yet another fundamental contradiction was between the pursuit of the Utopian mirages of Marxism and the promotion of the national interests of the State within its limited available resources. It seemed obvious that the former pursuit could not be maintained indefinitely at the expense of the latter, and would have to give way sooner rather than later. The means employed, namely the rule of a minority party enjoying a monopoly of political power, deriving its legitimacy from Marxist doctrine as interpreted by Lenin, may not be able to prevail for long against the irresistible ideas unleashed in the last century that exalted the individual and endowed him with human rights and fundamental freedoms. I thought that the peoples' political rights and economic realities would from time to time assert themselves and strengthen movements towards liberalization and humanization of society, as the rigidities of ideology declined and withered. But it seemed to me that the Russian people might find it easier to bring about political change than economic transformation, which by its very nature might well take a generation or more. I had always felt that Russians considered themselves Europeans, and their deepest instincts were to join the cultural mainstream of Europe's

social democracies. This undercurrent of aspiration would rise to the surface when the traditional sense of Russian insecurity was replaced by normalization of relations with Western Europe and Germany in particular. And, as a result, Russia might revert to its rightful status as a major European power, rather than try to retain the position of a superpower, which seemed to embarrass rather than enthuse her.

Coming back home in 1967 was a relatively painless experience. Things had not changed much since the deaths in quick succession of Nehru and Shastri, and Indira Gandhi's election as Prime Minister reassured the people that Nehru's goals would be pursued. Such reassurance appeared to be called for, because for one thing during the Chinese invasion of India in 1962, our non-alignment had come under threat of erosion by panicky officialdom. And later in 1964, the first Chinese atomic explosion also sent shock waves through some nervous Indian officials, who went round shopping for nuclear security umbrellas, in blithe disregard of our commitment to non-alignment. Nuclear protection against hypothetical nuclear attacks was not to be had, and while the finely-spun threads of our non-alignment were preserved, it was brought home to us yet again that the sturdy cord of our self-defence needed to be strengthened in ways and means appropriate to the threats that might be encountered. The Indian rupee was in difficulties and the air was thick with rumours of devaluation, and of international pressures for a substantial reduction in the exchange rate. Should devaluation be in one full stroke of 57 per cent, or in small doses according to the capacity of the economy to respond to the challenge? It seemed to my untutored mind that the ensuing debate in every home and office was highly academic. The political situation at the Centre facing Indira Gandhi was no less daunting, for her father's contemporaries were bent on devaluing her, a mere diffident woman though a Nehru and a greenhorn in the riotous jungle of Indian politics. She was not expected by them to last long as Prime Minister, and the old ones began to sharpen their long knives and plot to entrap her, and in the process they fought among themselves to succeed her. Under her demure, defenceless exterior she successfully concealed an iron will and imperial temper, as well as the uncommon skill to use political power ruthlessly. She had her own following of course and also substantial electoral support all over India; the *mise en scène* for my homecoming promised to be exciting.

When I was first posted to the Ministry of External Affairs in 1959, eleven years after joining the diplomatic service, I used to be reminded by those of my colleagues, who had become past masters in playing

musical chairs, that I would have "to prove" myself, even though I might have been the cat's whiskers in the paddy fields of Burma, the sugarcane plantations of Guyana and the conference rooms of the UN Trusteeship Council! When the Foreign Service was formed on the outbreak of political independence, various methods of recruitment were resorted to for filling posts at different levels, such as the induction of the ICS, the institutional FPSC, the ad hoc Boards, the political and the purely personal methods. The name of the game then was to get one's seniority fixed as high as possible, and then to guard it with tooth and nail against its erosion in practice by the rule of promotion by merit, which was only supported in principle. Thus one's initial seniority assumed an importance equal to the immutable laws of the Medes and Persians. I was recruited to the Service by the Federal Public Service Commission, which also fixed my seniority in the manner prescribed by the Government, but those who were recruited in other ways had their seniority fixed ad hoc and *ad hominem*. The incorporation of the various kinds of animal, fish, fowl and red herring in one seniority list was chaotic and unprincipled, and as many as 23 persons including me lost heavily in seniority. And the representations for one's rightful place could not be dealt with, because the relevant files had mysteriously disappeared! We accepted the misfortune as incorrigible in the circumstances, but it was a poor beginning for a new Service and it affected its morale and esprit de corps.

As things turned out, I did not have to prove myself when I was reposted to the Ministry the second time in 1967. I was by then a known quantity having served with all the three Secretaries to the Government then—Rajeshwar Dayal, C.S. Jha and Tikki Kaul. The Prime Minister, who was also the Foreign Minister, had come to know something of my work in Moscow and the UN. When I had occasion to call on her, G. Parthasarathy was with her and in some context he mentioned my wife who had been with Mrs. Gandhi in the same class at the Convent in Allahabad. Whereupon she looked at me rather sternly and enquired, "Is that so? Are you Sheila's husband?" I replied, "Yes, Madam, but please don't hold that against me." She gave me a Mona Lisa smile and said, "Neither against nor for!"

I was appointed as Joint Secretary in charge of the UN Division and told why by Foreign Secretary Dayal: "Your previous experience at the UN is the reason why and because of it, I do not expect you to be submitting files to me for decision. You have enough discretion to know what decisions to take yourself, and when to consult me personally." Those words were clear enough guidance for my operations, and

I sought and was given freedom to reorganize my Division as I saw fit. I reorganized it according to UN practices and staffed it entirely with regular IFS officers at the levels of Deputy and Under Secretaries, involved the Legal and Treaties Division and the Historical Research Division in UN work, and established direct contacts with other Ministries that had dealings with UN Agencies and Departments. I had excellent Deputies in Shailen Singh, Shahabuddin and Chinmay Gharekhan. Soon our expertise was much in demand and we were humming with unprecedented activity. I was asked to take charge also of the work of JS (Pakistan) pending the arrival of the chosen person, and I took it on knowing that I had in I.P.Singh a first rate Deputy. To make my life even more interesting Tikki Kaul wanted me to take over the External Publicity Division, which was quite large and had a Director General in charge of it in the person of Ashok Ray. I agreed to function as the Official Spokesman (which was what Tikki really wanted), leaving the administration in the competent hands of Ray.

Pakistan

Arshad Hussein was then Pakistan's High Commissioner in India, and I had known him in Moscow where he was his country's Ambassador. He called on me shortly after I took charge of the Pakistan Division, and among other things expressed the curious hope that I would deal with Pakistan as a "foreign" country. It turned out that my predecessor spoke Urdu, had been in Pakistan, and like many others had found it odd to look upon Pakistanis as "foreigners". That sort of intimacy could be helpful sometimes in the conduct of diplomacy and at other times it could be embarrassing. For my part, I assured Arshad that I was a barbarian from the south and though redeemed to some extent by marriage in the north, I was unfamiliar with Urdu culture, and Pakistan itself was an unknown entity. I would not have the least difficulty in treating Pakistanis as aliens from another world; indeed I had been dealing with them as adversaries at the UN, and he could count on me in treating Pakistan in all respects as just another foreign country. He laughed a little uncomfortably at my forthrightness, for apart from the protocol aspect of his visit, he had come to discuss an incident somewhere in India that engaged his Government's interest in the context of the Nehru-Liaqat Ali Agreement. I said I would have it examined and give him our official reply at the next meeting. I changed the subject and asked him how the India Division in Pakistan's

Foreign Ministry was staffed and organized. From his reply I gathered that it was larger than our Pakistan Division and staffed by persons who had become experts on Indian affairs through long experience in that Division; evidently for various reasons they did not want to be posted out of Pakistan. During my inspection of our Pakistan Division I was horrified to discover that the person who had been longest in that Division had done two years and was busy scrounging about for a posting abroad. Needless to add that I was unable to find a single expert on Pakistan in the Indian haystack.

Arshad's second visit gave me my second lesson in Indo-Pakistan relations. He came with a request that we grant permission for a marriage motorcade of some 200 cars to come to Delhi by road from Lahore bringing a Pakistani bridegroom with his large party to marry an Indian bride here, the wedding celebrations lasting two weeks, and to take the bride and her much smaller party to Pakistan with the bridal jewellery and other valuables estimated at a fabulous cost. He made out a convincing case for special dispensation on the ground that the political division of the country should not be allowed to come in the way of observance of common cultural traditions of relations separated by the partition. I was being asked to forget temporarily that Pakistan was a foreign country! I told him I saw no valid reason why the rules should be relaxed; many neighbouring countries had similar situations and there was nothing special about India and Pakistan. He expressed regret at my inability to appreciate the special features, but was good enough to prophesy that I would be overruled by higher authorities, which was what happened. I did not stay long enough in the Pakistan Division to understand the psychology of this love-hate relationship.

The third visit of Arshad was the last, for a few days later my relief arrived. Arshad came to lodge a protest against our shooting down a Pakistani civilian Cessna aircraft well inside Indian territory. Rejecting the protest, I informed him that the aircraft had taken off from Lahore airport, flown deep into Indian territory over several defence installations and refused to land when ordered to do so by our fighter aircraft. Lahore airport, when contacted, confirmed that permission had not been given to any civilian Cessna aircraft to take off. The behaviour of the aircraft was such as to make us suspect that it was equipped with cameras and was engaged in photographing military areas. Minoo Engineer, our Deputy Chief of Air Staff, had telephoned me saying that as the aircraft had refused to land and was scooting back to Pakistan, it had been shot down. It was an unfortunate happening, for when we inspected the crashed aircraft there were no cameras on board; some

fool of a pilot trainee had taken off without permission, strayed deep into India having lost his bearings and on encountering our fighter aircraft panicked and tried to escape.

The few months that I spent in the Pakistan Division were a diplomat's nightmare, for international law, rules and agreements were not adequate for dealing with the variety of problems that arose. Something more was needed, something ad hoc and indefinable for concession and compromise by one or the other side. But that is clearly not the answer to the backlog of problems that is so enormous that the solution of a few inevitably brings forth a spate of fresh problems, every one of which in its ultimate essence is a human problem of either need, or security, or aspiration, or simply the factor of human diversity. Partition has brought no final solution; it was no more than the price paid for British withdrawal. I ask myself: Where does Pakistan begin? In the minds of some Pakistan is a world that has no end, a world that in its turn breeds its own problems of human differences. The political dimension of the human prospect in the subcontinent is riddled with human diversities that are potential nations in the making, frozen embryos of other Pakistans. Problems within the subcontinent are symptoms of the common all-encompassing problem of the limitless growth of population, where every factor of human separateness creates its own identity and forms its own social unit that tries to outbreed others in the mindless race for survival and security through self-determination. The myopic vision of the political leaders, however, is limited to their own short-term future from one election to the next, and seldom beyond. Demographers think it is already too late to prevent a future of convulsion after convulsion in the subcontinent towards a special doomsday of our own creation, a Hobbesian struggle of everyone against everyone else. Signs of things to come are already here, but their underlying causes are misinterpreted and symptoms are being treated rather than causes. The subcontinent is fast isolating itself as a disaster area, overpopulated, unstable and pregnant with tensions and conflicts, and qualifying for the enforcement of an international cordon sanitaire in a generation or two. Indo-Pak problems pale in comparison!

Official Spokesman

The position of the official spokesman was no bed of roses in my time. It could have been such a bed most of the time, if his role had been better appreciated by the powers that were and he had been taken into confidence and fully briefed about the daily do's and don'ts. But "information" gives some who possess it a peculiar sense of power and they are reluctant to part with it, especially to the spokesman whose job it is to cast it to the four winds from the housetops. They would rather reveal it themselves *sub rosa* to selected editors and correspondents off the record, so that the power and glory of revelation is their own sweet secret. Such self-inspired leaks often found the ignorant official spokesman sinking slowly in a sea of confusion unable to confirm or deny the scoop. Once in such a situation I denied the leaked story, hoping thereby to flush out the source and forcing him to confirm it. But it did not work that way, for the source remained incognito; the denial was publicized and the correspondent who had scooped the story revealed his source to me apparently to remain in my good books. I had to brief myself by anticipating questions from the press and then running round the corridors of decision-making to find out the answers, and when (as sometimes has happened) the answers were conflicting, I had to seek the Minister and on two occasions the Prime Minister herself whom I found readily accessible. My formal briefing at a press conference of Indian and foreign correspondents was done every Friday, and I was accessible to them by telephone at all times, and daily at my office between 5 and 6 p.m. for informal briefing. I was also available for interviews to individual correspondents by appointment. As a matter of principle I always spoke for the record as long as I was the spokesman. It is for the press to evaluate my utility, and for my part I was fortunate in having at all times received courtesy and understanding from the correspondents. Unlike foreign correspondents, our own breed, barring the senior ones, were badly paid, poorly equipped and their working conditions were wretched. Some of them needed to be helped in many little ways with background information, documents and special briefing when required, especially if a foreign Embassy had targeted them for its attention.

Being misreported in the press is the occupational hazard of every spokesman, but I was spared that dubious honour. Whenever I wanted to put across a particular viewpoint, some correspondents could always be prompted to put the appropriate question to me, and I often used this device to our advantage. When I did not know the answer to a question, I would invariably say so and try to provide it later. "No comment" was a device I seldom used, except when fielding hostile questions and I had run out of humorous retorts. My first experience of offensively hostile questioning was in Guyana in 1953. I had gone

there to cover the constitutional crisis and the return of British troops, and so had the world's press correspondents. I was surrounded by a group of them as I was leaving the British Governor's residence, and one of them, a red-faced choleric type, had the following exchange with me:

He: What is your business here?
Me: Same as yours. I am here to find out what has been happening.
He: Has your red tie any significance?
Me: Red is the colour of love in my country.
He: Is Nehru a communist?
Me: If Mr. Nehru is a communist, then I am an Irishman!

The repartee at this point dissolved in guffaws of laughter, and I turned to the Governor's aide beside me and said, "I know it is funny but surely not all that funny." He replied, "Your questioner is an Irishman!"

There was never any such questioning at my press briefings in India. My problem was our own Parliament where I was criticized on the basis of unverified press reports once as a "lackey of British imperialism" and on another occasion as a "Soviet lackey who twisted the arm of Svetlana". On yet another occasion there were indignant demands for my dismissal for having contradicted the Deputy Prime Minister! This sort of unrestrained abuse of officials who were unable to defend themselves finally got my dander up when I spotted the offending M.P. at a cocktail party given by a leading journalist. I went up to him, introduced myself and asked him if he would care to repeat what he had said about me in Parliament under cover of immunity. Fortunately for me, my estimable host stopped me in time and got the M.P. to apologize in these immortal words: "Arre Sahib, we only criticize the Government. Nothing personal. You are such a nice man!"

L'affaire Bhagat was about the mysterious cancellation of Bali Ram Bhagat's call on President Kenyatta in Nairobi in March 1965 on his way back from the Independence Day celebrations of Mauritius. It seems Bhagat was carrying a letter from our Prime Minister to Kenyatta, and had asked his Kenyan counterpart, the Minister of State, to arrange a meeting with Kenyatta. When no such meeting materialized, Bhagat mentioned it to Kenya's Defence Minister who was able to fix an appointment with Kenyatta. The story went that the Vice-President of Kenya then got it cancelled at the instance of his Adviser Snelling, a British subject. *The Times of India* report on 22 March 1968 had it that the British Government had a hand in the cancellation, but this

was officially denied by the British High Commission. When I was questioned at my press briefing,I said that I did not know the circumstances of the cancellation, and that the British Government had denied that it had anything to do with it. This earned me the appellation of a neo-colonialist from one of our sovereign bodies. It is a typical case of "much ado about nothing", of a great deal of unnecessary fuss in Parliament (though not in the Foreign Ministry or in the press) about a meeting that might have been cancelled for reasons of protocol. Normally, Heads of State do not receive Ministers of State. And our P.M.'s letter could have been sent to its high destination through the Kenyan Foreign Ministry. The matter would have been handled with customary diplomatic *sang froid*, but for the unwarranted Parliamentary hysterics. Fortunately, the statements of our Prime Minister and Minister of State served to tranquillize further tantrums.

L'affaire Morarji Desai was more serious. The old man, who was then Deputy Prime Minister, during a visit to the USA in September 1967 made two statements on China's representation at the United Nations that sowed a good deal of confusion about our official position. To a question about the admission of China into the UN, he replied at a press conference held in the Indian Embassy on 12 September that "if a resolution were to be sponsored admitting China, we would certainly vote for it." And to the rejoinder "Do you mean that there should be two Chinas in the UN?" he replied:

> I do not know. There are at present two countries. Formosa is an independent country, as it is. And it is a member of the UN, though in the name of China, which I don't understand.

The confusion in Mr. Desai's mind created the impression that India might be reconsidering its position and favour the admission into the UN of China and Formosa. At my press briefing clarifications were sought with much persistence by foreign correspondents from the USA, Western Europe, socialist countries and Japan as well as by our own. I declined stubbornly to clarify the statement of the Deputy P.M., saying it was for him to do so, if he chose. I then explained that every year at the UN there were two proposals – one from the Western powers proposing the adoption of the credentials submitted by the member states, which needed and had the support of a simple majority – and the other from the socialist group proposing the seating of the representatives of the People's Republic of China, which needed but did not have the required two-thirds majority of votes. The correspon-

dents were not satisfied and pressed me to clarify our official position in regard to China and Formosa. I invited them to submit their questions in writing but without linking them to Desai's statements, which they did, and I obtained from the Prime Minister official replies to them. The Prime Minister also made a statement in Parliament saying, "the official spokesman did not issue any clarification about the Deputy P.M.s comments but in fact and quite rightly refused to comment on it". During this episode pro-Desai Congress M.P.'s accused the official spokesman of serious impropriety in contradicting the Deputy P.M.'s statement, though I had done nothing of the kind, and one of these busybodies (a lady M.P.) actually demanded my resignation. When I tackled her about it outside Parliament, she was all smiles and said, "Nothing personal. We are attacking Indira Gandhi by attacking her spokesman!"

My reaction was to write the following lines as "The Official Spokesman's Prayer", and Chalapathi Rau was amused enough to publish them in the *National Herald:*

Our Father who art in the Parliament
Sovereignty be thy name,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done in the Secretariat
As it is in the Parliament,
Give us this day our daily brief,
Forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive the Press,
When it trespasses against us;
And lead us not into speculation
But deliver us, Oh Lord, from a debate,
For thine is the Kingdom,
The Power and the Glory
For ever and ever
Until the next elections!

Soviet Defectors

On 19 December 1967 a Soviet citizen, Aziz Ulugzade, who had come to India as Interpreter to a Soviet Cultural Delegation, decided to defect to the United Kingdom. He left his hotel that night in a taxi and went to the British High Commission, where he applied for asylum in England. He was told that a reference would be made to the British

Government and their decision would be communicated to him later. As his Delegation was returning to Moscow the next morning, he did not go back to his hotel but spent the night in old Delhi in the tea shops and the grounds of the University. The following evening he went to the US Embassy to seek asylum, in the event of his request being rejected by the British Government, and he was offered temporary shelter there pending the decision of the US Government. While he was there, the Soviet Ambassador had gone to see him and he had informed him that his decision to leave the Soviet Union was for personal reasons and was final and irrevocable. The Soviet Ambassador then asked us to return Ulugzade to the Soviet Union; the US Ambassador wanted to keep him in his Embassy until his Government cleared his entry into the USA, and the British High Commissioner informed us that his Government had granted him permission to stay in the UK and would provide him with an air passage. When the US Ambassador called on Tikki Kaul, the latter informed him of the impropriety of sheltering Ulugzade and insisted that he should be handed over to us, which was done. We kept him in the Kingsway Camp, where I met him several times to ascertain his feelings and that he had freely decided to leave the USSR and go to the UK. The Soviet Ambassador met Kaul, who explained to him that the executive branch of the Government was bound to act in accordance with our laws and that Ulugzade was free to choose to leave India for any destination, but we would not hand him over to the Soviet Government against his will. The Soviet Ambassador muttered that we were paying more attention to Ulugzade's interests than to Indo-Soviet relations and were delivering him as a New Year gift to the British Government! He went on to moan that "the state was above the law" and that there was "a higher law" for safeguarding the interests of India and USSR! Kaul had the last word on this philosophic excursion by saying, "There is no higher law in India than Indian laws", a telling aphorism that put an end to the meeting. On New Year's Eve 31 December 1967 Ulugzade was brought to my house at 10 p.m. where he joined in our festivities. I accompanied him to the airport with a police escort and handed him over to the Captain of BOAC flight 925 that left for London that night, and nothing more was heard of Ulugzade. The entire incident was handled firmly and with diplomatic finesse by the Ministry. The Soviet Embassy and the British High Commission behaved correctly, but the US Embassy initially appeared to have reservations about our competence to resist Soviet pressures!

Svetlana

My involvement in the defection of Svetlana, Stalin's daughter, is a matter of public record and Parliamentary debate. It was alleged by some M.P.s that I had "twisted Svetlana's arm", and since I could not defend myself then, I reserved my part of the story for my memoirs. I came into it on 8 March 1967 after the Soviet Embassy informed the Ministry of External Affairs that Svetlana had departed on the night of 6 March by Qantas flight for Rome accompanied by an American Embassy official. It was alleged by the Soviet Embassy that Svetlana's defection could not have taken place without the connivance of our officials and the complicity of the US Embassy. The same day the US Ambassador told us that Svetlana had gone to his Embassy on 6 March at 7.30 p.m. and sought asylum in the USA, and was provided with an air ticket to Rome and an escort. Foreign Minister Chagla asked me to meet Svetlana and find out how and why she left the country so suddenly. I had known her and her husband Brajesh (uncle of Dinesh Singh) in Moscow, and that was perhaps why I was chosen.

The US Embassy informed us that she had gone to Switzerland from Rome, and so I flew to Geneva and with the help of the Swiss Government I was able to meet her in her hideout in the Bernese Oberland. Throughout my meeting a Swiss diplomat Anton Janner was present and there was no arm-twisting by me. I was to have met her a second time but as her hideout was located by the vigilant international press, she had to be moved elsewhere and I could not meet her again. But I spoke to her on the telephone and requested her to send me a letter addressed to our P.M. and another to Dinesh Singh, her host in India, explaining briefly in her own words the circumstances of her mysterious disappearance from India. She sent the two letters, and also a third envelope for her children to be delivered to them when I went to Moscow. I telephoned her again to thank her for the two letters but advised against my delivering the letter to her children, for it would surely be intercepted and get her children and others mentioned in it into trouble. I said that instead she could talk to her children on the telephone and I would request the Swiss authorities to arrange the telephone call. That was done and she telephoned her children in Moscow and took a very long time over it; I then destroyed the letter she had given me for her children.

When I met her, she appeared very tired and had obviously been crying. I am setting out below her rambling story, as she told me, in her own words to preserve its emotional content.

Brajesh Singh was my husband although we were not married. We wanted to marry and I asked Kosygin for permission. But he rudely refused me permission and said, "Why do you want to marry an old sick Hindu? Why don't you marry a Russian?" That man Kosygin has no heart or feeling. He is a cold calculating machine. He is no friend of your country. He thinks you are all poor and primitive. Khrushchev was better. He had no objection to my marrying Brajesh and he helped him to get his job in Moscow. He was human and he would have allowed me to stay on in India. Kosygin is my enemy my personal enemy. I wanted to bring my husband to his home in India and he would have recovered his health in the sun. I asked Kosygin to let me take my husband to India but he refused. He killed my husband and since then I have wanted to take my revenge on him. He told me the latest medicines would be given to Brajesh in Moscow, but he lied to me. They did not look after Brajesh properly in Moscow. It was never the same doctor who took care of him. Every time it was a different doctor and I had to tell him the whole history from the beginning. They did not want to cure my poor husband. They gave medicines too strong for him. When you and your wife saw Brajesh on the night of 30 October 1966, he wanted to see you, for he knew he would die soon. That night when he became ill, I called the doctor and a different one came. I now believe they wanted Brajesh to die because I wanted to marry him. How can I ever forgive Kosygin for what he did to me? When Brajesh died, Kosygin had pangs of conscience, I suppose, for he said I could go to India with Brajesh's ashes. I wanted to go to India with my husband alive, but Kosygin sent me with his ashes! He thought I would forgive him but, no, I can't.

Anyway when I left Moscow I had every intention of going back to my country. I had no other idea. Kosygin told me I could go to India for only two weeks, and that in New Delhi I should stay in the Soviet Embassy. And when I came to India with Brajesh's ashes, the Soviet Embassy made my life miserable. They kept me there for five days. Surov was my boss and Smirnov was my adviser. They did not respect my feelings and they were unconcerned with a widow's mourning. For five days they poured poison into my ears about India and Indians. They warned me against my Indian friends and told me not to trust them. They ridiculed me for observing Hindu customs and said I should go to Kalakankar, throw the ashes in the river and come straight back. Smirnov said I should not eat or drink in

Kalakankar, because everything was dirty and poor there. They were giving me orders to do this or that, and to think this or that about my Indian friends. Surov and Smirnov treated me like a prisoner. I had no personal life, no personal feelings and no time to mourn. I was angry and bitter–they made me so during those five days, they and Kosygin. They lived in India and yet they knew nothing about Indians.

I went for a little walk one evening after a stormy meeting with Surov. I walked past the American Embassy and was surprised to see that it was so close to the Soviet Embassy. I felt that if things became totally unbearable, I could go to the American Embassy for refuge. No, I had not then made up my mind to ask for asylum. It was only the beginning of an idea to take revenge on Kosygin, if he demanded my return to Moscow. After the Soviet Embassy's treatment I felt I could not go back to Moscow—not to the apartment where my husband died. He could have lived but for Kosygin. I wanted to go to Kalakankar. Maybe I could live there forever. Brajesh loved it and often spoke to me of it. I wanted to be left alone and in peace by my own Embassy, and so I agreed to Madame Kassirova accompanying me to Kalakankar.

When I reached Kalakankar, Brajesh's brother Suresh and his wife received me so kindly and treated me as a member of their family. They understood my sorrow and made me feel at home. I was so happy there with Brajesh's relations. They were so good and human to me. I became disgusted more and more with my Embassy and fed up with my Government. Mme. Kassirova wanted me to immerse the ashes quickly and go back to Delhi, and she kept on nagging me. I could not bear it any longer and I sent her back with a letter to Benedictov. And then I had peace and it was so lovely and wonderful to be with Suresh and his family. I ate what they ate. I drank water from the well. Then Surov came to Kalakankar to take me back and I became afraid. I did not want to go back so soon. After Brajesh's death I was a nervous wreck, but for the first time I was finding peace in India. I wanted to stay on until 10 April and I wrote to Kosygin and asked for permission. I sent back Surov with the letter.

I then visited Allahabad, Lucknow and Benares and everywhere my Indian friends were so kind and gentle with me. I was happy in India. And then two Russians came to Kalakankar and gave me Kosygin's reply. They said I should return to Moscow and no extension would be granted. No reasons were given. Why should I

be treated like this, as if I was State property or Party property? What have I done? What did I ask for–only to stay in India a little longer. It was a very reasonable request and yet Kosygin denied me a few extra days in India where I was at peace. I rebelled against his decision. I would not go back to Moscow, to that apartment where my husband was allowed to die. Then I realized suddenly what I had put up with for so long in Moscow. I had made many personal sacrifices, many compromises for the sake of the children. Why should I go back to that life, never, never, never. I decided to return to Delhi and try to find a way out.

I came back to Delhi on 5 March to Dinesh Singh's house and on the morning of 6 March I was taken to the Soviet Embassy by Surov. And there I asked to see Benedictov in order to plead my case with him personally. I begged him to let me stay in India until 10 April, but he was no better then Kosygin. He was rude and unbearable. He said I had become a Hindu and that I should remember that I was a Russian. I replied that I was a Georgian. I loved my country. I also loved India and wanted to stay on a little longer. The Indian Government had no objection. Why then is the Soviet Government opposed to my extension? He gave me no reasons and said I must return to Moscow on 8 March. I realized it was hopeless to argue. They had made up their minds and would force me to return. And so I agreed to go back on 8 March. They were so pleased they had won a victory over me. I asked for my passport and they gave it to me. They asked me to lunch but it was unbearable. They were so pleased with themselves. They pressed me to drink vodka and eat meat, but I refused as I did not like either vodka or meat. They were sarcastic that I had become a Hindu vegetarian.

I was sure that if I went back to Moscow, I would never be allowed to return to India. I realized the only thing to do was to go to another country, change my nationality and go back to India later on, and the Soviet Government could not do anything then. It was my own personal decision. No one else is responsible for it. Certainly I did not plan this with Americans or my Indian friends. I wanted no one to be involved and, therefore, I did not inform anyone. I am to blame for my decision and I have no regrets. The Soviet Government alone is responsible; they forced me to take my decision. No one helped me in my plan, I swear this in the name of my children. It was all so simple. I phoned for a taxi from the gate of the Soviet Embassy and left in it with a small suitcase. The Embassy officials were busy with some function for Zakharov, and the women were rehearsing for a

concert and did not notice my movements. I had told Surov I would be dining with Dinesh Singh on 6 March and he did not object. Of course, this was not true but I had to say it. I asked the taxi driver to take me to the American Embassy and he took me there straight. I had only a few personal things in my suitcase and I took care not to leave any letters or papers behind in the Embassy. Only a few gifts for my children were left, but it is unlikely that the Embassy would send them. Meeting Benedictov in Delhi was the last straw for me. To Kosygin's country I would not return.

I reached the American Embassy and told the guard I was Stalin's daughter and wanted asylum. I then met some officials and they discussed for two or three hours and said they would send me the same night by air to Rome. I went to the airport with an American official, completed the usual formalities and waited for two hours because the plane was delayed. In Rome I was told I could not go to the USA just now. I was advised to apply for a visa for Switzerland and I did so. I was given a three months' visa and here I am. I don't know now what I shall do. But I shall not return to Moscow. I know my children are there and their minds will be poisoned. But the children will understand my feelings and my decision, they are no longer young.

I am very sorry my sudden flight caused so much trouble for my Indian friends and for the Indian Government. I did not want to cause any embarrassment to anyone, and that is why I did not consult or inform anyone. But I know the Soviet Government will put the blame on your people. It is just like them to blame others for what they have done. They have no respect for individuals. It pains me that I gave trouble to my dear India that I love so much. My dream, my wish is that I will go back to India one day. This I will keep in my heart always.

As I listened to this harrowing account of Svetlana's agony, she was evidently re-living her recent past and I was impressed by its palpable genuineness and by the fact that she was literally driven by Russian insensitivity and heavy-handedness to decide not to return to Moscow. It was quite plain that Russian officialdom had taken several decisions that were unintelligent, beginning with the refusal to let her marry Brajesh, followed by the refusal to let her accompany Brajesh to India for medical treatment knowing that Brajesh would not go alone, then allowing her to go to India with his ashes and not letting her stay there till 10 April when the heat of the Indian summer alone would have

driven her back to Moscow and her children, treating her like a prisoner while in her own Embassy, and incredibly returning her passport to her and inexplicably withdrawing the watch on her. It was this final act of carelessness that enabled her to leave India quickly and quietly with American help. Instead of admitting their responsibility, the Soviet Embassy had the temerity to accuse some unnamed Indian officials of collusion with American officials in spiriting Svetlana out of India, an allegation that was entirely baseless, and mischievous too because the Russians claimed that they had received this information from the Americans, who vigorously denied it when we confronted them with it. However, it was quite possible that the Americans might have hinted to the Russians that some Indians would have known of Svetlana's intentions, just to make things difficult for Indo-Soviet relations. This sort of hinting is a well-established practice among Secret Service Agencies.

Our Foreign Minister Chagla had asked me to go to Moscow after meeting Svetlana and give the Soviet Foreign Ministry my findings. I met the Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin and told him the reasons why I held his Government and Embassy responsible, and firmly rejected their allegation of any Indian involvement. In those days in 1967, foreigners did not need exit permits to leave India and so Svetlana was able to leave without our knowledge. What was most curious about this whole affair was the collusion between the US and Soviet Governments to play it down. The reasons for it (according to Swiss diplomats) were their anxiety to ratify the US-Soviet Consular Convention, and their concern not to let this incident jeopardize their combined efforts to produce the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty! Minister Chagla made a statement in Parliament that Svetlana had left India of her own accord with a valid Soviet passport for Rome on the night of 6 March by Qantas flight, and that no Indian official had any prior information about her intended or actual departure. She had come on a private visit and was not a guest of the Government. The Government had no occasion to consider the question of giving her asylum, as she had made no such request at any time. The Soviet Embassy had made some representations, but there was no failure of any kind on the part of any of the Government Agencies. The Soviet Ambassador was transferred three weeks later! The Soviet Embassy had not distinguished itself by levelling false allegations against Indian officials.

Burma Revisited

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had been invited to make an official visit to Burma in 1969 and because of my past Burma connections Tikki Kaul included me in the P.M.'s party. I was last in Burma in 1951 when U Nu was the Prime Minister, and 18 years later I returned to find U Nu under house arrest and General Ne Win lording over everything. There were still several of my friends in high places who were glad to see me again. Ne Win had been my senior in the University by six years, and I sent word to him through his third wife, my contemporary, that he must not let our Prime Minister return to India empty-handed. And thus was established a private channel of communication that came in useful. I participated in the bilateral talks which were attended by Ne Win's representative, a Colonel, who furiously scribbled in his notebook whenever I spoke giving "political" reasons for raising the level for decisions on certain matters. It was the pre-arranged cue for bringing such matters to Ne Win's notice. I told Mrs. Gandhi that Ne Win would probably inform her personally of his responses at the seaside resort of Sandoway over the weekend, which he did to our satisfaction.

One of the purposes of her visit was to obtain Ne Win's permission for U Nu to go to India on pilgrimage. Ne Win agreed to a meeting between U Nu and Mrs. Gandhi, and I brought U Nu from his residence to the lakeside guesthouse where Mrs. Gandhi was staying, and the two of them walked up and down along the shore for an hour before going inside, which was "bugged". U Nu agreed not to make any political statements during his pilgrimage in India and Ne Win released him shortly afterwards. I met U Nu, on the P.M.'s instructions, on 28 July 1969 at Sarnath; he was then about to leave for Thailand. He told me that he and his colleagues had been in Burmese jails for long periods under the supervision of Military Intelligence, and they had been released probably because of the increasing popular discontent, which might have made Ne Win want to consult the old leaders. In fact, he did consult U Nu and gave the impression that he had undergone a genuine change of heart, and U Nu had made some proposals for restoration of parliamentary democracy and constitutional government with Ne Win remaining as the Head of State. Ne Win had turned down the proposals, as they had been flatly rejected by his military collaborators. To some extent Ne Win was no longer a free agent, and was obliged to line up with the military.

U Nu and his thirty-three colleagues in jail had reached the conclusion that armed rebellion was the only course left to them. The country had become bankrupt, having been looted by the military dacoits, and the plight of the masses and the peasantry was pitiable. The people expected the old leaders to act, and not sit with folded hands. U Nu himself would have preferred a satyagraha type of movement, but his friends had warned him that the fascists in power would have no compunction in shooting them all down. He realized that an armed rebellion could not be organized from inside the country, for every leader was being watched day and night. Their only hope was to escape to Thailand and start operations from there. They were planning to foregather in Bangkok and review the chances of an armed revolt directed from outside the country. U Nu would go to London first and announce the formation of the Government headed by him, seek international recognition, call on the Burmese people to revolt and then proceed to Bangkok. He sought my reactions.

I said that the well-established policy of the Indian Government was not to recognize Governments in exile, and there was also no question of our providing assistance in the form of military supplies. I could not help feeling that U Nu had not calculated the risks with robust realism, and I said so. The odds, I felt, were heavily loaded against success, for the revolt was dependent for men, money and material on notoriously unreliable foreign sources in Thailand, which had been infested by adventurers and mercenaries prone to meddling in other countries. Moreover, the international atmosphere was unfavourable for armed interventions from outside. The two superpowers preferred to maintain the status quo, such as it was. It might be desirable for U Nu to bide his time yet awhile, for Ne Win might well be forced by circumstances to consult him again in setting up a less unpopular government. In any case, it seemed absolutely necessary to review with extreme care the situation on the ground, for it might suggest another course of action. U Nu replied that the die had already been cast and he was committed to his colleagues in Burma to stage a revolt, even though it might fail. A few days later U Nu went to London, announced the formation of his government, called for a general rebellion and then went to Bangkok. He was to learn there that most of his colleagues could not escape, and the revolt which was no more than an act of keeping faith with his colleagues quietly fizzled out.

Fiji

Fiji was due to become independent from British colonial rule in October 1970. European planters had gone there in the early 1860s to grow cotton, which was profitable because of the disruption of cotton cultivation during the American civil war. The price of cotton fell following the revival of American cotton production after the end of the civil war. Fiji was on the brink of bankruptcy and the Fijian tribal chiefs offered to cede Fiji to Queen Victoria. The Deed of Cession was signed in October 1874 and thus Fiji became a British Colony. Under the terms of cession the British Government undertook "to maintain the authority of the Chiefs, to preserve their social structure and customs, and to prohibit alienation of traditional Fijian land". This commitment, subsequently endorsed unanimously in 1944 by the non-Fijian inhabitants of the Colony, had been regarded by the Fijian people as the Charter of their Rights.

The first lot of Indian immigrants were taken to the Colony in 1879 to grow sugarcane, which had supplanted cotton as a profitable cash crop. The British Secretary of State for India Lord Salisbury informed the Government of India in 1875 that Indian indentured labour would be allowed "to settle in the Colony and would be in all respects free men with privileges not inferior to those of any other class of British subjects". This came to be known as the Charter of Indian Rights. The total number of Indian immigrants until 1916 when their entry was stopped was 61,015, of whom 40 per cent returned to India. By 1987 the Indian population had grown to 714,000 constituting 49 per cent of the Colony's total population.

The British Government was in the process of consulting Fijian and Indian leaders in 1969 about the constitution of independent Fiji, and as a part of that process it invited the Indian Government to send an official delegation to become acquainted with the emerging situation and offer its views. T.N.Kaul and I were sent as our Delegation, and we met the British Government's representatives, Indian leaders as well as Fijian Chiefs including Ratu Mara. It seemed to us that the constitution of independent Fiji should guarantee freedom and equality for persons of Indian origin permanently resident in Fiji no less than for the indigenous inhabitants, and also equal representation in Parliament, bearing in mind that they then constituted 49.1 per cent of the total population. The concern of the Fijian Chiefs at that time was that there should be constitutional safeguards for the preservation of Fijian social structure and customs, and for the prevention of alienation of

traditional Fijian land. In fact, the constitution as it finally emerged gave the veto to the Council of Chiefs on any matter affecting "Fijian land, customs or customary rights". It also provided for an elected Parliament of 52 members, consisting of 22 Fijian seats, 22 Indian seats, and 8 seats for other communities. This distribution was accepted by all as adequate and equitable for partnership in democracy, and the constitution worked well for 17 years. The bogey of Indian domination was unrealistic, as Indian representation was a minority of 22 in a House of 52, and more importantly because of the veto power vested in the Council of Chiefs.

But the unexpected occurred when at the elections of April 1987 the winning Coalition Party acquired a majority of elected Indians, i.e., 19 Indians, 7 Fijians and 2 Europeans, whereas the opposition Alliance Party had 15 Fijians, 3 Indians, 5 Europeans and 1 Chinese. What had happened was that the Fijian community had split between traditionalists and labour, and the latter had made common cause with Indian labour in order to win the elections. This was interpreted by Fijian Chiefs and the Army as a potential danger to Fijian lands and customary rights that could arise from Indian political power, and a coup d'etat by the Army followed. The threat to the Fijian fedual order had in fact come from Fijian radicals, and not from Indians. Such a threat was inevitable sooner or later from Fijians themselves demanding with wider education the democratization of their social order. But the immediate victims were Indians who were deprived of their political rights and subjected to the worst aspects of organized racial discrimination, and many of them left Fiji. This development was not something T.N Kaul and I had foreseen in 1969 as likely, although we had privately advised Indian leaders in general terms never to exploit politically Indian numerical majority, and always to show the utmost sensitivity to Fijian traditions and aspirations, for it was plain enough for all to see that real power was in the hands of the Fijian army, police and administrative bureaucracy. But the dynamics of democracy developed a life and purpose of its own and it came to be suppressed by the truth of Fijian reality, which is Fijian supremacy. The future of Indians remaining in Fiji, mainly agricultural workers, small traders and low level professionals is grim, and a better deal has to be renegotiated for adequate and equitable representation for them in elective organs and for human rights and freedoms.

War in the Middle East

I was kept quite busy in 1967 with the Middle East situation, which exploded into a disastrous war for the Arab States. The Security Council and the General Assembly of the UN were in continuous session considering one draft resolution after another. India was a member of the Security Council, and our representative G.Parthasarathy, an *eminence grise*, was in touch with us at headquarters informing us of developments and seeking instructions when necessary. Moreover, ours was the largest contingent in the UN Emergency Force in the Middle East established in 1957 after the Arab-Israeli war of 1956; we had 978 soldiers which was nearly 30 per cent of the total Force. Armed incursions into Israeli territory from Jordan and Syria by Palestinians of El Fatah group had been steadily increasing. Israeli retaliations had been massive and their consequences in lost human lives and in material destruction had far surpassed the cumulative total in Arab attacks against Israel. Both Syria and Jordan had been taunting Nasser with failure to help them and taking shelter behind the UNEF! Arab public opinion would not allow Nasser to remain indifferent to Israeli threats of general war and Israeli reprisals. And thus Nasser felt compelled to call for the withdrawal of UNEF from Egyptian territory so as to be free to respond to Israeli attacks. The first request for withdrawal was made by the Chief of Army Staff to General Rikhye, Commander of UNEF, on 16 May.1967.

The request was referred to the UN Secretary-General U Thant of Burma, who plunged into a round of consultations with member States of the Security Council and others contributing troops to the UNEF. The formal request from the Government of Egypt to U Thant followed on 18 May stating simply that the Government had decided to terminate the presence of UNEF on its territory; no reasons were given in writing but we were told in Cairo that Egypt would be in a better position to defend itself against and respond to attacks by Israel, if UNEF were to be withdrawn. Our position was that although the General Assembly resolution 1001 was the basis of UNEF's creation, its location on Egyptian territory was the subject of an agreement between the UN Secretary-General and the Government of Egypt involving the latter's consent. If that consent should be withdrawn, there would be no legal justification for UNEF to ramain on Egyptian soil. Our view was shared by the UN Secretary-General, the USSR, France and many others. However, the USA and the U.K. wanted U Thant to defer the decision to withdraw in the hope of devising some

alternative arrangement. Since UNEF was a peace-keeping force and not intended for enforcement action, it had to be withdrawn, or it would have been forcibly disarmed.

On the night of 18 May U Thant set in motion the arrangements for UNEF's withdrawal, expressing at the same time to Egypt his serious misgivings. And then he proceeded to the Middle East with a view to meeting Nasser personally. While he was still en route to Cairo, Nasser announced on 22 May the closure of the Straits of Tiran, providing access to the Gulf of Aqaba, to Israeli shipping. It had been common knowledge then that a blockade of the Straits of Tiran would be a *casus belli* and Israel would go to war over it. U Thant suggested to Egypt a freeze or a moratorium of two weeks to give more time for diplomacy to work for averting a war, and he also requested Israel not to send ships through the Straits of Tiran during the same period. Israel refused to accede to his request. When U Thant met Nasser on 24 May, Nasser said he would accept the two weeks' breathing spell suggested by U Thant, if Israel would do the same. He also assured U Thant that Egypt would not be the first to attack, but he remained firm on UNEF's withdrawal.

The war began on 5 June and it was well established that Israel had struck the first blow. Israeli artillery opened fire on two camps of the Indian contingent of UNEF, which were in the process of being abandoned, and Israeli aircraft strafed some UNEF convoys. The casualties among Indian soldiers were 14 killed and 16 wounded. The Egyptian air force was eliminated on the ground in the first few hours of the war, and during the next three days Israel occupied the Gaza strip, the whole of Sinai, the West Bank of Jordan, the Arab sector of Jerusalem and was advancing on Damascus, and had also captured the entire tank force of Egypt in Sinai. It was a well-planned well-executed war on a massive scale, and the withdrawal of UNEF seemed to have been timed to suit Israel! Nasser admitted later to *Le Monde* that he had fallen into the trap set for him by the USA and Israel, which had wanted UNEF out of the way! As Israeli forces reached the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, the Security Council had exhausted itself by calling vainly for a cease fire three times in quick succession. The Soviet Union then broke diplomatic relations with Israel. Finally, on the night of 11 June the Security Council unanimously ordered a cease fire, and the war ended on the sixth day and came to be called the six-day war. The General Assembly met in special session and adopted several resolutions, none of which was accepted by Israel. It was only on 22 November that the Security Council adopted resolution 242, which still

remains the unimplemented basis for a comprehensive solution. Parthasarathi in the Security Council strongly condemned Israel for killing 14 and wounding 16 Indian "sentinels of peace", and I took up the matter further in the Ministry by proposing the closing down of the Israeli Consulate in Bombay and demanding compensation through the UN. The Consul for Israel, Arieh Eilan, whom I had known in the 1950s at the UN, called on me in New Delhi to say that while he personally would be glad to go home, he thought I would fail in closing down his Consulate, for the Israeli lobby's tentacles had reached influential Indian political circles. He was right; I failed. I wondered how many Indian soldiers would have to be killed by Israel before we reacted.

Czechoslovakia

Another major event that held my attention in the Ministry was the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Winds of change brought about a free and independent press and radio critical of the Soviet Union, and Alexander Dubeck, the First Secretary of the Party, introduced a series of internal reforms and liberal policies, which incurred the suspicion and opposition of the leaders of the USSR. Western radio stations broadcast programmes designed to strengthen the solidarity of the liberal movement in Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union moved to station its troops in Czechoslovakia on its frontier with West Germany. On the night of 20 August 1968 Soviet troops were flown to Prague and Soviet tanks entered the country and were on their way to the capital city. The reason given by the Soviet Union was that "at the request of the Czechoslovak Party and Government and in order to meet a threat to the socialist system", Soviet forces together with those of other Warsaw Pact members entered the country. Romania and Yugoslavia condemned the invasion as aggression, and communist parties in Western Europe took the same line in sharply-worded statements. The strongest condemnation came from China, and Fidel Castro said there was absolutely no legal foundation for the invasion.

Here in India a special envoy of the Soviet Government arrived and called on our Prime Minister to explain the circumstances. Mrs. Indira Gandhi heard him out in stony, unsympathetic silence and said that she felt a terrible blunder had been made and enquired how soon the Soviet and other forces would be withdrawn. She also wanted an assurance that Yugoslavia would be in no danger, for there was great concern

about its integrity among non-aligned countries. The Soviet representative's reply was that he would consult his leaders and give their response as soon as possible. The GDR Ambassador called on me. He was an old pacifist and had worked with Gandhiji and had been interned in India during the war. I put to him just one question: "How can you justify the presence of German uniforms in Czechoslovakia again?" He tried hard to suppress his tears and after some time left without uttering a single word, but leaving behind the note he had come to deliver. It must have been a tremendous psychological trauma for him. Meanwhile, in the Security Council Denmark introduced a draft resolution condemning the invasion and calling for a quick reversal of the situation. The Soviet Union vetoed it and India abstained from voting, because we felt that formal condemnation at that early stage, 22 August, would not be helpful in finding a solution. Mrs. Indira Gandhi had been informed by the Soviet Embassy that the leaders of Czechoslovakia including Dubeck and Soviet leaders were already meeting in Moscow with a view to ending the occupation. And the Czechoslovakia Mission to the UN withdrew from participation in the Security Council debate, as it would not contribute to the success of the Moscow negotiations. Mrs. Gandhi received the assurance she had sought from the Soviet Union, namely, that Tito might be reassured that Yugoslavia was in no danger, and this was communicated to Tito.

Thus ended the tragic episode of Czechoslovakia. It had begun in 1967 with students' protests, economic breakdown and repression. Dubeck, a faithful Partyman, took charge of the reform movement and tried to keep it within limits of admissibility. The liberalization programme initiated by him several months earlier was inadequate and the forces of freedom, "the sacred fire" according to Napoleon, demanded more. He lost control of the movement at some point, when it acquired a downhill momentum of its own and radio stations mushroomed all over the country interacting with Western stations and calling for rejection of one-party rule, self-determination and a neutral status. Dubeck's several appeals for self-restraint went unheeded, and the Russians panicked and over-reacted militarily. Although the intervention was successful in maintaining the old order, the Soviet Union was pulled up short by three unexpected reactions – firstly the strong criticisms and condemnation from a large number of communist parties and the fact that there were no pro-Soviet Czechoslovaks, secondly the opposition of the vast majority of non-aligned countries, and thirdly the Western warning delivered by George Ball at the UN that the USSR had "dealt a shattering blow to hopes of a detente and cast a

shadow across the world". In these unfavourable circumstances, Brezhnev and his colleagues felt it wiser to agree to withdraw their forces, with the exception of one Soviet garrison.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty

One of the major issues that I had to deal with in the Ministry in 1967-68 was the so-called Non-Proliferation Treaty, the infamous fruit of superpower detente. The Treaty was privately negotiated between the USA and the USSR, and they presented identical texts of it to the Geneva Committee on Disarmament on 24 August 1967, disregarding entirely the views of the UN General Assembly in its resolution 2028 of 1965. Our representatives on that Committee, Vishnu Trivedi and Azim Husain, had strongly opposed the Treaty as it was unequal and discriminatory, and far from being a step towards nuclear disarmament it would be used by the superpowers to proliferate their nuclear weapons, since the Treaty did not specifically prohibit their doing so. After consulting our Legal and Treaties Division, I prepared a comprehensive note examining objectively the various provisions of the Treaty in relation to international law, the consequences of our signing or not signing it, and the different views of other States. Rajeshwar Dayal was the Foreign Secretary and he asked me to send the note to the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Atomic Energy for their opinions and when they were in, the papers were put up to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

She went through some thirty pages of notings and wanted a condensed paper prepared for the Cabinet meeting, which she convened shortly thereafter. I was also invited to attend that meeting and be available to clarify any points that might arise. Although no recommendation was made in the paper, anyone reading it would have recognized that the overwhelming weight of argument was in favour of our not signing it. The Cabinet meeting was quite short and Indira Gandhi conducted it in the manner of an amiable and self-confident Headmistress. She said she had read the paper, assumed that others had done so and called upon the Ministers one by one to state their views! Those who had not read the paper were caught unawares, and they waffled and floundered, and Mrs. Gandhi was indulgent and moved on to the next. Someone ventured, "If all States signed, India would be isolated if it did not sign." Mrs. Gandhi looked at me and I gave out the names of States that would not sign. Someone else said,

"Why should we foreclose our option by signing?" and another pointed out the provision for withdrawal from the Treaty. A few replied, "Why sign and then withdraw? Why sign at all?" Mrs. Gandhi remarked, "Why speak of the nuclear weapons option, when our policy is against nuclear weapons. We are in favour of nuclear disarmament but this Treaty would permit the five States that have these weapons to make more and more of them. I take it that we are all against signing it. But we need not campaign against it." There was a general murmur of assent, and it became our policy.

As Indira Gandhi correctly foresaw, the Treaty was a fraud and was designed for nuclear proliferation by a few through a dubious legal device. Banning nuclear weapons from those that do not have them rather than from those that do have them is a strange way to maintain peace by increasing the danger to it from the latter's proliferation of nuclear weapons. The possession of nuclear weapons by the former, it was argued, would enhance the very danger that the latter were trying to avert by increasing their own nuclear weapons arsenals. This is the perverse logic that is based on division of the world into the "responsible" few and the "irresponsible" many, and to solemnize this division by an international treaty is an immaculate piece of deception and a blatant travesty of the principles of justice unprecedented in modern international law. The non-aligned dumb informed the aligned deaf that they were prepared to accept a Treaty that would serve two purposes, firstly States with nuclear weapons would undertake to destroy them and not make any more of them, and secondly non-nuclear weapon States would undertake not to make or acquire them. This mutual balance of undertakings was absent in the Treaty, which was therefore criticized as unequal and discriminatory. It was the high watermark of superpower detente, and they saw it as an essential foundation of world peace through maintenance of their balance of power, of which the nuclear threat game was a vital aspect.

The only concession made by the superpowers is in article VI of the Treaty, in which they undertook "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament". Such negotiations as have taken place relate to arms limitation and control, and in that sense they have certainly been "pursuing" negotiations, but not actually negotiating measures for halting the nuclear arms race and for nuclear disarmament. Instead by proliferation of their nuclear weapons on a massive scale thereby enhancing the risk of nuclear war, they were jeopardizing the supreme interests of mankind and of all States. There

is no reason why in these circumstances States that are parties to the Treaty should not denounce it and give the requisite three months' notice of their withdrawal. I doubt if such denunciation would disturb the superpowers very much, for the fact is that the Treaty is of little importance to their security, which seems to be based on their nuclear corpulence.

If possession of nuclear weapons is the legitimate right of a few States, it must necessarily be the legitimate right of all States. If nuclear weapons are not legitimate for the overwhelming majority of States, then they must be banned for all States. The double standards in the Treaty constitute a violation of the customarily recognized rule of the Law of Nations that immoral obligations cannot be the object of an international treaty. It cannot be part of international law. Furthermore, a treaty is usually judged by two standards: (a) whether it has fulfilled the purposes of its preamble, and (b) whether its provisions are being implemented. The primary preambular purpose of the Treaty is prevention of "proliferation of nuclear weapons, as it would seriously enhance the danger of nuclear war". When the Treaty came into force in 1970 the two superpowers had between them 6,000 nuclear warheads and by 1990 their stockpiles had proliferated tenfold to 60,000 warheads. Article VI of the Treaty has been so grossly violated as to make the Non-Proliferation Treaty a farcical misnomer for Nuclear Proliferation Treaty.

The Non-Aligned Movement

Although I was not present at the creation of the non-aligned movement, I have had many opportunities to see it come of age. It is a mistake to think that Nehru created non-alignment, for Nehru himself said, "I have not originated non-alignment; it is a policy inherent in the circumstances of India, in the conditioning of the Indian mind during the struggle for freedom, and inherent in the very circumstances of the world today." It is, however, possible that Krishna Menon may have actually coined the arcane word "non- alignment". Nehru had been speaking for years about the danger of military alignment and the power politics of military blocs. Nehru was opposed in principle to the formation of a movement for unity of action by non-aligned States, for it would affect one's independence of judgement and freedom of action. As Menon clarified, a non-aligned nation must be non-aligned

with the non-aligned in order to be truly non-aligned; there is much more in his saying than a playing with words, or plain sophistry.

By the time of the first summit meeting at Belgrade in 1961 the membership of the UN had increased from its original 51 to 104 as a result of the progressive decolonization of the British, French and Belgian empires. What remained were Portuguese territories, British and French islands and Southern African colonies. The back of colonialism had been broken mainly by national liberation movements, and the realization by colonial powers that neo-colonialism, i.e., economic control was more profitable for them than continued political-control. The non-aligned movement when it came into being at Belgrade had to contend also with other strongholds of racist colonialism in South Africa, Namibia and Palestine, and above all with the new growing danger to mankind from the nuclear arms race between the superpowers, to which special attention was given. The second summit at Cairo was a turning point, for with the increase in African membership the character of the movement underwent a significant change. The post-war leaders of national liberation struggles, unlike the pre-war ones, had a different and more realistic appraisal of the hard-core colonial powers, and took to arms more readily and obtained arms from wherever they could secure them. They used the non-aligned movement for forging unity of political action at the UN. Whether or not it produced any practical benefits was less important than the psychological reassurance it gave, and periodic summit meetings acquired an indefinable political importance for non-aligned nations. They became their special show or event, unlike annual UN General Assembly meetings where non-aligned leaders were overshadowed by the Great Powers and their allies.

However, several years were to pass before the third summit at Lusaka in 1970. Yugoslavia began to generate interest in it after the Soviet Union's military intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Tito convened a Consultative Meeting in Belgrade in July 1969, to which T.N. Kaul and I were deputed as India's delegates. Yugoslavia was proud of its national independence and its freedom to pursue its own road to socialism, and had rejected overtures from the two military alliances, NATO and WTO. Aware of its isolation in Europe and conscious of its strategic location, Yugoslavia cherished the psychological security of belonging to a larger world-wide movement consisting of non-aligned countries. The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in pursuance of the Brezhnev doctrine of defending the gains of socialism by demonstration of socialist solidarity drove

many a Yugoslav politician and diplomat to near hysterics. The Consultative Meeting convened in Belgrade was for the primary purpose of obtaining endorsement for the view that besides imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and racism, "there were new forms and forces of hegemony that were resorting to power politics and pressure, including armed intervention, subversive activities and interference in the internal affairs of independent States". I was in the Political Committee chaired by Bata Uvalic, once Yugoslav Ambassador to India. I agreed to the above formulation after creating some diversion by seeking a precise definition of "hegemony", during which discussion there was disagreement and much heat, and so I penned the following limerick to lower the temperature:

What in the world is hegemony?
Is it having a Playboy bunny?
If so, what is wrong
with having it as long
as the bunny finds it sunny and funny?

From our point of view the main problem we faced at the meeting was how to head off the attempt by Pakistan to gatecrash into the non-aligned movement. Its Ambassadors were busy behind the scenes reasoning in terms that had a good deal of appeal: Pakistan claimed it had a lot in common with non-aligned countries and was pursuing a policy of independence, as could be seen from its voting at the UN, which was similar to the votes of non-aligned countries. It was not the same as the votes cast by members of CENTO and SEATO, the military alliances which Pakistan had joined for safeguarding its own security, and not the security of the Great Powers. We pointed out the pertinent fact that Pakistan had indeed a lot in common with non-aligned countries except non-alignment, and that was the crucial reason for excluding it from membership of NAM until it formally and finally quit CENTO and SEATO. Any deviation from the established criteria for membership would compel India to withdraw from the movement. T.N. Kaul made such a démarche in the solemn and moving tones of an Archbishop reminding the congregation of the wages of sin – India's withdrawal! It had the effect of an ice-cold shower on the meeting, but it was not the end of the story, only its beginning. It took Pakistan another ten years to withdraw from its multilateral military alliances with the USA, and it was then admitted to the NAM at the Havana summit in September 1979. On that historic event I wrote:

It took a lot of ingenuity
and also some casuistry
for Pakistan to believe
and eventually achieve
the non-aligned goal of ambiguity!

Bilateralism

I do not know who thought of the idea of our Ministry of External Affairs having wide-ranging bilateral talks without an agenda at the level of officials with the Foreign Ministries of other countries. It seemed to be the answer to someone's prayer, for soon it became trendy and we were meeting foreign diplomats at New Delhi or at their capital cities. These talks yielded a good deal of mutual understanding but hardly any concrete results. Boredom quickly set in, and the talks and frequent trips abroad made inroads into one's normal routine, not to speak of domestic peace. The bilaterals gradually fell into disuse, but when they were in fashion there was much enthusiasm. My own reactions to some of them were in limericks, which device I was compelled to resort to in order to overcome waves of ennui.

The Americans came with Katzenbach
to play cards with their own pack;
we found American poker
more difficult than Russian joker
when untied aid was the stake.

The Russians came soon after the Yanks
with adequate cover for their flanks;
when asked about their game in Pindi
they complained of our undue shindy
over their wooing Pakis from Chinese cranks.

The British came down to earth to fuss
they were a medium power like us;
meant as a compliment
it caused merriment
as they were more medium than others.

The French came determined to speak
in their tongue which to us was Greek,
and so in hated English

with a flair and flourish
gave us our fill of French logique.

Worried by problems of too much security
the Japanese met us beaming with amity;
the threat to Japan
was not Russian or Han,
but the galloping growth of its own capacity.

The Germans were upset by the NPT;
it locked the stable that was empty,
and sanctioned Russian inspection
promising American protection,
is it a lock, or is it a key?

With the Aussies we talked of Chinese games
such profound analysis, such modest claims,
despite this fulsome exercise
we showed some surprise
that they were unaware of Chinese aims!

Whose valour in war did not falter
whose manner in peace is softer;
to join NATO for security's sake,
or be an open island in an open lake,
was the grim choice for little Malta.

We went to see the Burmese way
to socialism in one short day;
there is rice in the field
and fish the rivers yield,
but Indians no longer get their pay.

Our bilateral talks with Outer Mongolia
were like a dream about paraphernalia,
of horses and radish
and a toast in kumish
to the health of our respective genitalia!

And so dear friends we come to the end
of bilateral bliss, a wonderful blend;
if it achieves nothing
it shows at least one thing
that we are as good as others pretend!

Author in 1954 as Chairman of the Petitions Committee of the UN Trusteeship Council.

With Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt at Hyde Park, New York State.

With Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in New York in 1955.

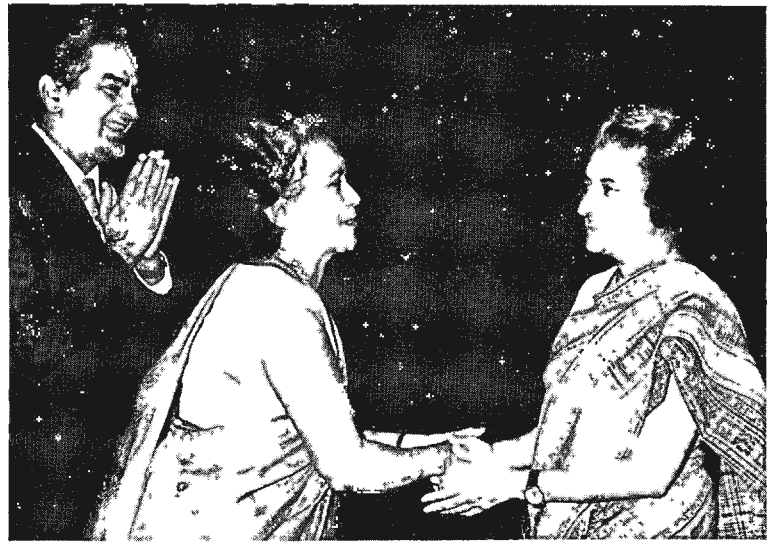
Receiving the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala on 1st May 1960.

With Krishna Menon at the UN in 1956.

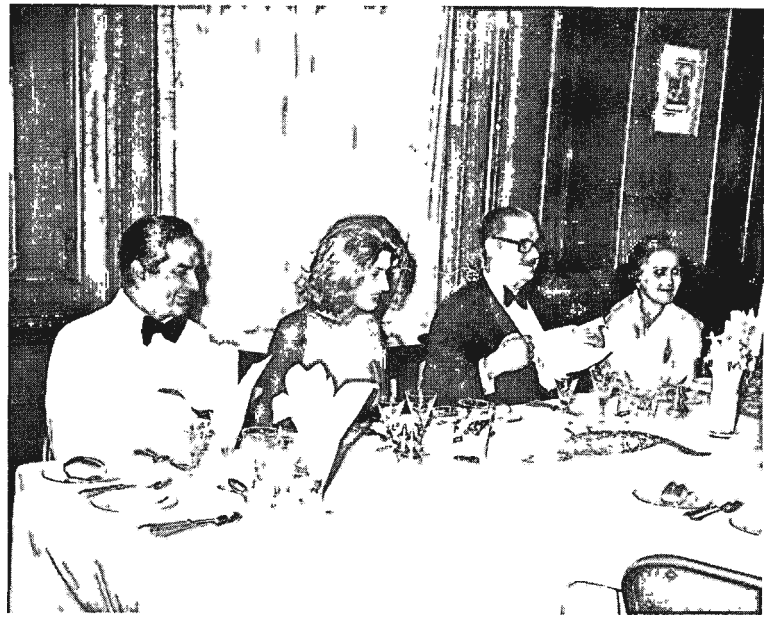
Signing the first submarine contract in Moscow with General Sergeichik in 1964.

Presenting credentials to President Tito in November 1969.

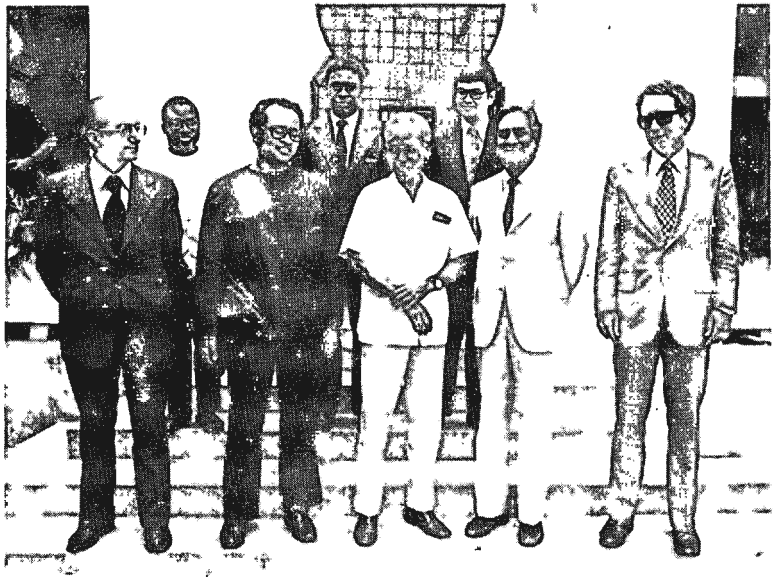
Author's wife garlanding Tito at the Indian Pavilion at Zagreb Fair, 1970.



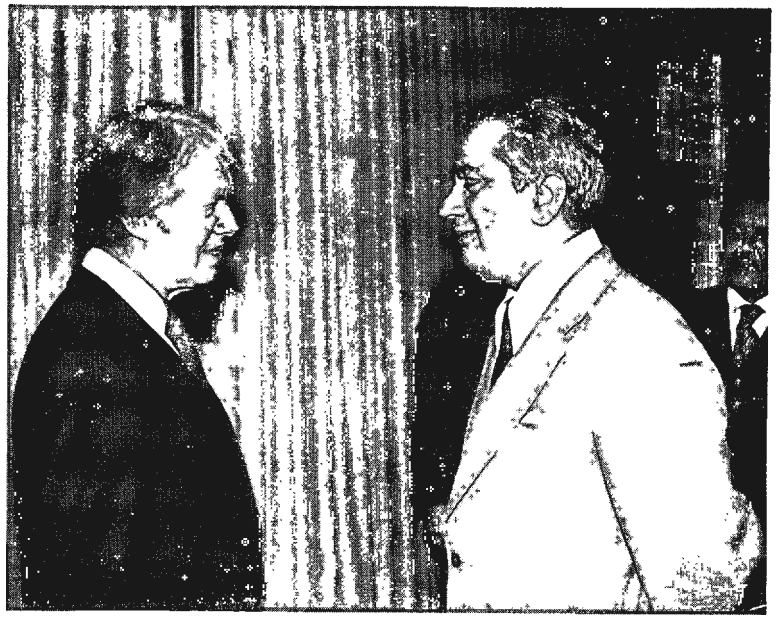
Receiving Indira Gandhi, 1972.



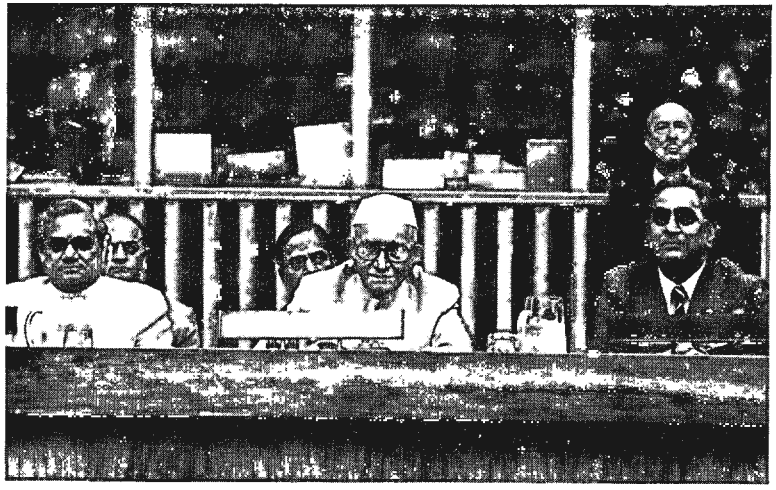
At the Embassy Dinner in Washington in 1974 – author, Nancy Kissinger, Senator Hughes and the author's wife Sheila.



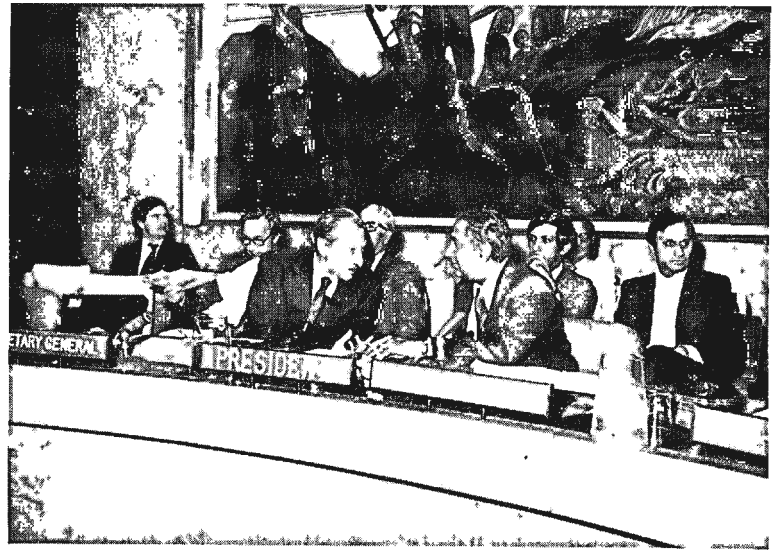
With Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania at Dar-es-Salaam.



With President Carter of USA at the UN Session on Disarmament, 1978.



UN Press Conference 1978 – Foreign Minister Vajpayee, Prime Minister Morarji Desai and author.



Author as President of UN Security Council in October 1978 with Kurt Waldheim as UN Secretary General.

Portrait of the author on his appointment as Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva, 15 June 1979.

My term in the Ministry was drawing to an end and I was told that my next assignment was Ambassador to Yugoslavia with concurrent accreditation to Greece. I had had a hectic term at headquarters and I needed time to rest and reflect. I could do that as Ambassador, for apparently anybody could be an Ambassador. Politicians, Professors, Admirals, Generals, Air Chief Marshals, Policemen, Judges, Journalists and Administrators have been made Ambassadors. So why not also a diplomat? I could do the same as others do to represent India, and leave the dirty work to the specialists in the Embassy. And so I looked forward to touring Yugoslavia and Greece, getting to know the people as well as the high and the mighty, and waiting for those rare moments of truth when Ambassadorial intervention is necessary to unravel a Balkan paradox, or to resolve a Greek dilemma, or to make them worse!

8.

YUGOSLAVIA

I received my credentials from the hands of President Giri and enquired of him if he had any words of advice to give me. It seemed he had, for he beckoned me to come closer to him and whispered "Get me invited to Yugoslavia." I said I would, and I contrived to get him there on an official visit during my successor's time. My call on the Prime Minister was short, and sweet in the sense that she expected me not to get into trouble, as I had when I was official spokesman, for she would not now be able to bail me out! The Foreign Secretary evidently envied my escape from head quarters, for he threatened to get me back as soon as an opportunity for it presented itself. There was, of course, no question of briefing me for my next assignment, for when I delicately enquired about the procedure for it, the administration replied that I should do two things: (a) I should read the reports from our Belgrade Mission, and (b) I should go on Bharat Darshan. I naturally said I would read the reports when I got to Belgrade, and promptly made plans to take my wife to Kashmir, Bombay, Pune, Goa, Cochin, Trivandrum and Kanyakumari.

Thus revived by the coolth of Pahalgam and the warmth of the southern waters we arrived in Tito's Yugoslavia in December 1969 in the middle of a snowstorm at night to learn that our reception committee including the Chef de Protocol was stranded half way between Belgrade and its airport. They arrived an hour later cursing me for the ungodliness of my entree, but soon it stopped snowing, the sun was shining and birds were singing—so it seemed after a few pegs of slivovitsa, the magical brew of Yugoslavia. We were taken and installed in a house that had the reputation of having been the best house in the Balkans in 1927, when Prime Minister Nicola Pasic built it for his favourite mistress, with ceilings decorated by colourful paintings of flying cupids and over-blown nude women, and furniture alive with cooing doves and prideful peacocks and panelling heavy with the grapes of Eros! Daylight the next morning revealed many other little

incitements to ardour and amour, including a convenient underground tunnel for a quick getaway! It was an abode of celestial sin fit for Greek gods and goddesses on rut, but why it was allotted to the Embassy of Gandhi's India I was unable to discover. It took us some time to live it down by learning to ignore it, despite the covert looks and fixed smiles of surprised guests.

The morning after my arrival I was received by the Chief of Protocol who informed me that the presentation of my credentials would be the next day. I was being hurried, I thought, by the bug of non-alignment that had bitten Yugoslavia deep and long. There was none of the glitter and splendour of presenting credentials in the Kremlin, no guard of honour and no uniforms and gold braid. It was like any business meeting, with the Yugoslavs sensibly attired in lounge suits, and we (the Indians) alone looked and felt awkward in our tight-fitting long johns and loose-fitting black frockcoats smelling of mothballs. It is customary on such occasions for the Ambassador to go into a huddle with Tito for twenty minutes or more, leaving the others to imbibe, inhale and gormandize. Tito was an excellent host, a good listener but not a great talker. He enquired of Indira Gandhi's health and political problems, and seemed relieved she had overcome them. I told him of the overworked cliche: "the only man in our cabinet was the Prime Minister". He was not amused, for he said that it was not complimentary to women and that Indira was rather like Joan of Arc. He was genuinely fond of and concerned about her.

He asked me some questions about India's relations with her neighbours, especially Pakistan and China, and the USSR, and then wanted to know whether India would quit the non-aligned movement if the other members were to favour Pakistan's admission. Evidently, his Embassy in India had been sending signals to the contrary! I replied that the question of India's quitting the NAM should not arise as long as India's opposition was correctly interpreted as absence of consensus. But if there should develop a trend to isolate India for obstructing the indiscriminate growth of the non-aligned movement, we might well decide to quit so as not to frustrate the general will. India could easily afford to remain non-aligned without being a member of the movement. Our chief concern was the violation of the fundamental principle of non-alignment, i.e., non-membership of military alliances formed in the context of Great Power rivalry. In our opinion it was a mistake to think that by admitting Pakistan or Romania we would be weaning them away from their military alliances. Those alliances would in no way be weakened; on the contrary, it was the non-aligned movement

that would be weakened by the erosion of its faltering unity. In any case, non- aligned States individually were devoid of military or economic power, and collectively they could not amount to anything, nor could they secure legal recognition of their status, unless they held fast to their basic principles. The question of legitimacy, Tito agreed, was very important, and that was why Romania had been given only the status of a "guest state". I said Pakistan would not accept such a status, for its purpose was to be far more active than a guest. As I was getting up to leave, Tito asked if I had any special problems to raise with him, and I said that I had two requests. The first was the technical advice of one of his gardeners in the spring for the Embassy garden, and the second was that I might be permitted to approach him direct, and not through the Foreign Ministry, in the event of an emergency. He granted both requests readily, and with a smile, saying I had not asked for much.

According to the ideology of Yugoslavia, Karl Marx is God the Father, Lenin the Son, Stalin the unholy Ghost and Tito the chief Apostle. To understand Yugoslavia, the country of the southern slavs, with its unique distinction of having 7 frontiers, 6 autonomous republics, 5 nationalities, 4 languages, 3 religions and 2 alphabets, it is necessary to know something of the legend of Tito, the mystery of his identity and the ever present reality that he was in my time at Belgrade. As a historical figure of our times, he had the romantic background that included the fall of the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Czarist empires, the birth of the Russian revolution, the Second World War during which Yugoslavia was occupied by the Nazi army and Tito's final victorious struggle for the liberation of his country. Tito was the *nom de guerre* of Josip Broz, the seventh child of the seventh generation of Brozs who had been living in Kumrovec in Croatia since 1554. He inherited the solid physique, the shrewdness, perseverance and patience of a long line of Croatian peasants. He began life as a metal worker under the strict conditions of the guilds of the Austro-Hungarian empire, which discriminated against Croatian workers. Thus he came to join the workers' movement for equal rights and national liberation of Croatia. When war came, he saw active service against the Czarist army, was wounded, captured and sent to Siberia as a prisoner of war, and there in prison became a communist and joined the International Red Guard.

With the end of that war began a new phase in Tito's life, one of political organization of the workers of his country, which was now under the rule of Serbian monarchy. He joined the Communist Party in 1920, which was ridden with factions and directed from Moscow.

The Comintern's approach to Yugoslavia was theoretical and unrelated to the realities of life, and whereas the need of the hour was the forging of one State, it advocated the break-up of Yugoslavia into a Confederation of Danubian States! When Tito became the Party's helmsman, he was quick to find a basis for the united struggle of the peasants and the trade unions against the feudal role of his country. Land to the tillers, workers' self-management in factories and equal rights for different nationalities was the basis with which he unified the movement. Tito was arrested during one of the demonstrations. He refused to recognize either the competence of the court to try him, or the legitimacy of the laws, and he was sent to prison for five years. Those were the years (1929 to 1934) when he taught himself to efface the difference between the metal worker and the intellectual. On his release in 1934 he went underground for nine years using an astonishing variety of aliases. He spent some time in Moscow studying Marxism and military strategy. He became the Organizational Secretary of the Party and returned to Yugoslavia in 1936 to plunge into its reorganization and with Moscow's blessings rose to be General Secretary, thus becoming the undisputed leader of the Party thereafter.

When the Second World War came, the Allied Powers backed the royalist regime which collapsed under the onslaught of German forces. It was left to Tito to organize the people, marshal the resources, formulate the tactics and harass the occupying army relentlessly inflicting on them heavy casualties. Tito acquired his legendary reputation during those years. The Germans carefully planned six operations to capture Tito but every time he broke through miraculously to safety taking with him the wounded. While the partisan war was on, he held two Party congresses, set up a provisional Government and adopted a constitution based on the principles of independence, sovereign equality and self-management of the economy! Military help, inadequate and late, came from Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. But Tito demonstrated his independence dramatically by shooting down two intruding American aircraft and by getting the Soviet troops quickly out of Yugoslavia soon after the war! Stalin reacted by expelling Yugoslavia from the Cominform and imposing an economic blockade. The West increased its pressures on Tito over the Trieste question. Stalin would have divided the country, making Serbia and the South a Soviet satellite, while the West would have brought back the old King and installed him in the north. Neither pressure succeeded and Tito preserved the unity of Yugoslavia and emerged as an international statesman and a non-aligned leader of proved resolution and strength.

It used to be said that to try to bind Tito by the ties of Soviet ideology, or the inducements of Western aid, was like trying to catch an eagle with cobwebs!

The tasks that he faced after the war were no less formidable. The ever-present fear of Soviet hegemony and the potential military threat of a Soviet drive to the Adriatic Sea, especially after the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, combined to make Yugoslavs extremely nervous. Non-alignment as a world force gave Yugoslavia a certain measure of political security, though in the early post-war years pro-Stalinist elements in the Party continued to cause concern until Rankovic and his followers were expelled in 1966. Peace of mind for Yugoslavia depended on the development of relations with the USSR on a basis of equality. Joining NATO would have meant having to give up its ideology for Yugoslavia. Instead it was important to establish good relations with Western Europe, particularly West Germany, France, Italy, the UK and the USA. In the long run Yugoslavia would have to find a place among Europe's neutrals.

Tito was going strong at 78 when I went to Belgrade and symptoms of the succession fever were beginning to appear. On the occasion of Lenin's birth centenary in 1970, the Moscow editorial board of *Pravda* invited Tito to contribute his thoughts on the significance of Lenin to Yugoslavia. Tito used the opportunity to draw attention to those aspects of Lenin's views that justified Yugoslavia's unique path to socialism. He recalled Lenin's teachings in particular that the Party could not by itself carry out a revolution but needed to form a partnership with the broad masses; that the experience gained in revolutionary practice should be used to develop revolutionary theory; that the experience of no single Party could be the sole model for other revolutionary movements; that the participation of all the working people in the management of the State was the essence of socialist democracy; that nations had the right to self-determination, equality and sovereignty. His article served to underline the independence of the Yugoslav road to socialism through the principles of equality of nationalities and workers' self-management, the two main foundations of the country's federal structure.

These two principles have proved to be a mixed blessing. The areas rich with human and other resources, such as Slovenia and Croatia, have applied the principle of self-management successfully and to great advantage, but they complain about their relatively heavy burden of financing the development of the economically backward south. They want greater autonomy and object to being penalized for their

ability to earn more. Evidently, the economic roots of nationalism cannot be eradicated, nor can the parasitism of the south. However, the spirit of accommodation is ever present in the country but the extent of accommodation is not unlimited. Workers' participation has reached the stage when workers virtually control the factories, enterprises, etc., for it is the workers who elect management boards and decide production plans, marketing, distribution of income, investment policy, etc. This decentralization has led to a situation when the continued utility of the Party is questioned, when equality of the republics is causing conflicts between them and also between them and the federal centre, and when exposure to the market economy is making entrepreneurs of workers. There is fierce competition among enterprises managed by workers leading to failures, mergers, monopolies, etc., and a section of workers demands payment according to needs and another according to output. Apparently, it is easier for Marx to enter Universities than factories managed by workers! These dilemmas, contradictions and tensions have led to demands for secession in some republics and to contrary demands for greater centralization from others.

The Yugoslav experience of reforms through constitutional amendments, providing for orderly succession after Tito and for safeguarding self-managing socialism, is followed closely by the USSR and other socialist countries, because of the underlying eternal question – more democracy or less democracy? It is a fascinating question with its roots deep in history and its tentacles far into the future, and it provokes Western ambitions and Soviet misgivings. Western ambitions are played up as a psychological necessity and not as a real danger. The Soviet danger is played up as a Marxist duty to exploit the inner contradictions of Yugoslav revisionism. Either external danger, real or imaginary, is enough to give the Yugoslavs periodical hysterics of non-alignment, but the fact is that they have an incredible genius for resolving their problems ad hoc after interminable discussions. Political theory is desperately vital for them; without it they would be adrift in the open sea, and the Party would lose its *raison d'etre*. Titoism, i.e., self-management, is an exercise in making theory conform to the realities of life. The placing of more or less emphasis on "self" and "management" has been the name of the game, and it has come to mean at one end of the spectrum "national independence" and at the other end "secession" of the republics.

This special fear of secession of one of its republics, Croatia, manifested itself during the crisis that caused East Pakistan to break

away and establish itself as Bangladesh. Croatian nationalism is of ancient vintage; its independence as a Kingdom came to an end in AD 1100, when it united with Hungary for 800 years. With the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Croatia became a part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia under a Serbian monarchy. And then the Nazi army overran Yugoslavia in 1941 and dismantled it, making Serbia its Protectorate and Croatia a separate short-lived Kingdom. At the end of the war, Croatia was once again a constituent part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1970-71 economic decentralization and differences over distribution of assets and liabilities between Croatia and Serbia were exploited by Croatian nationalists to promote a separatist movement. There were several strikes and when the unity of the working class became the target, Tito intervened forcefully through the Croatian Party to carry out extensive purges of the nationalists, and a crisis that might have drifted into a civil war was thus averted. Tito was a Croat, his authority was unquestioned and, but for him, a civil war might have provided the incentive for external intervention from Hungary and the USSR.

Bangladesh

It was about that time that India was compelled by circumstances to intervene in East Pakistan at the request and in support of the indigenous movement for national liberation, and Bangladesh came into being. The Yugoslavs were fully aware of the fact that a year earlier at the general elections the people of East Pakistan had democratically expressed their will and elected their representatives, but the results of the elections were set aside and the Government of Pakistan had imposed on them a military regime. They were also aware that India had been at the receiving end of ten to twelve million refugees from repression, torture and worse in East Pakistan. It was no surprise to them that the people of East Pakistan should have launched a movement for self-determination through the overthrow of military rule by West Pakistan. When the matter was taken to the United Nations, the General Assembly called for a cease fire and withdrawals of troops to their positions *ante bellum*, which was the standard type of resolution that ignored the *casus belli*. Most member States of the UN vote in favour of such a resolution as a matter of principle without judging the merits of underlying issues. Yugoslavia did the same, because its attitude was that it was not permissible for one State to intervene in the

internal affairs of another State in response to an appeal from a nationalist-secessionist movement. In the situation then prevailing in Croatia, a negative vote by Yugoslavia would have given the wrong signal to the separatists – this was the explanation given for the Yugoslav vote for the resolution. The contradiction between supporting the national liberation of East Pakistan and suppressing the Croatian nationalists proved too difficult for Yugoslav diplomacy to reconcile.

I expressed our disappointment to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia and said that by voting for the resolution Yugoslavia had favoured the restoration of the status quo ante, i.e., the return of military repression to the people of East Pakistan. Yugoslavia could have abstained on the ground that the resolution had failed to recommend a realistic political solution, and abstention would not have attracted the Croatian situation, which in any case was very different. I called on President Tito and explained our concern over the Yugoslav vote along the above lines, and added that even if Yugoslavia had wished to equate Pakistan and India, it could have abstained, but by voting for the resolution it had sided with Pakistan and the forces of repression and anti-democracy. Our press and the general public had, therefore, come to feel that Yugoslavia assumed an anti-Indian posture for reasons we could not comprehend. Furthermore, there was the question of genocide and the exodus of over ten million refugees to India – these could not be accepted as strictly an internal affair of Pakistan. We were greatly dismayed by Yugoslavia's vote in favour of the resolution, and I asked the President what reasons we should give to our press and public as the Yugoslav rationale.

I believe that President Tito recognized the validity of the arguments in favour of abstention, for he said that this alternative had not been brought to his attention. He telephoned his Prime Minister in my presence and asked him to convene a meeting of the Council of Ministers the next morning which he would attend. He told me that he would do what he could even at that late stage, and hinted that he would make a statement in Parliament. The upshot was the dismissal of the poor Foreign Minister who had been misled by his bureaucracy, and Tito made a statement in Parliament on 16 December 1971 favourable to Bangladesh, recognizing the rights of its people to decide their destiny themselves.

I did not believe that Tito had been privy to the decision on the Yugoslav vote. For during the war for Bangladesh, I had gone to Tito with a request for a large order of mines to neutralize attempts by the American fleet in the Bay of Bengal to land its marines to support the

Pakistani forces in action against us. His response was positive and instantaneous. He realized the urgency of our need and telephoned his Defence Minister General Lubicic in my presence, told him of our request and asked him to meet our requirements immediately from their own stocks. I said that from the following day an Air India Boeing 707 would come to Belgrade every night to lift the mines, which we did successfully and in the utmost secrecy for four nights. Again, during the earlier defections of East Pakistani diplomats from their Embassy in Belgrade I had kept President Tito personally aware of the details of the information they supplied. Tito's sympathies were with us and I had no doubt that Tito was not consulted by the bureaucracy about the Yugoslav vote at the UN; hence his embarrassment and his strong reaction in sacking the Foreign Minister, and his recognition of the rights of the people of Bangladesh. I had thus seen Tito twice in action. He listened carefully, put the right questions, took the decisions himself quietly and saw to their quick implementation. No Ambassador could have asked for more.

9.

GREECE

"For a thousand years, from the sixth century BC to the fifth century AD, there were Greeks in India. They travelled as explorers in the pay of the Persians and marched as soldiers in Alexander's army. They came as wandering philosophers and seaborne traders, as artists and ambassadors, as administrators and princes. They founded kingdoms and cities, and there were few parts of India that they did not penetrate. They invaded the valleys of the Indus and the Ganges, the plateaus of the Deccan and the beaches of Gujarat. As merchants they traded to the Malabar coast and the coast of Coromandel, and as mercenaries they served in the palaces of Tamil kings". Thus begins the Prologue to *The Greeks in India* by George Woodcock. The Greeks came as strangers to India and many stayed on and became absorbed in the races of India. The ancient Greeks were undogmatic and they brought a culture, not a creed. Greek women served as bodyguards within palaces, and Greek soldiers maintained the outer watch in Madurai, the capital of the Pandya Tamil kings. Tamil poems describe "the valiant-eyed Yavanas whose bodies are strong and of terrible aspect, who patrol the streets, fortified with palm toddy, and who are excellent guardians of the gates of the forts". 'Yavana' is the Indian version of the Greek 'Ionian'.

Megasthenes, who was the Greek Ambassador to the Court of the Indian King Bindusara, said this of Indian philosophy. "In many points their teaching agreed with that of the Greeks, for instance, that the world has a beginning and an end in time, that its shape is spherical, that the Deity interpenetrates the whole, that the soul is immortal, and so on." The most striking resemblance between the thought of Pythagoras and of Indian philosophers is his theory of transmigration, "that the soul is an immortal thing, that it is transformed into other kinds of living things, that whatever comes into existence is born again in the revolutions of a certain cycle, nothing being absolutely new, and that all things that are born with life in them ought to be treated as

kindred". As another impressive example of similarity of ideas, H.G. Rawlinson mentions reincarnation and refers to "the famous apologue of Er the Pamphylian, with which Plato ends the *Republic*. Er sees disembodied souls choosing their next incarnations at the hands of Lachesis, daughter of Necessity." Orpheus chooses the body of a swan, Thersites that of an ape, Agamemnon that of an eagle. In considering such similarities one must bear in mind that often almost identical ideas have developed and still develop simultaneously and independently in distant places, because a common mental preoccupation fostered their emergence. In both Greece and India the sixth century BC was a time of great intellectual ferment and there were continuous contacts between the two countries through travellers, and also at the intermediate point of contact, Alexandria in Egypt.

Modern literate Greeks know the history, travels and conquests of ancient Greeks. They are profoundly influenced by the teachings of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and Socrates, and by the lessons and experience of the wars between Sparta and Athens. They are also conscious of Greece's ancient contacts with India and Egypt, and there is reality in their remembrance of past trilateral relations between these three countries. It is a part of their normal schooling. Before I went to Athens to present my credentials I delved into the past and read whatever was available in English translation of the writings of Ptolemy, Plutarch, Diodorus, Megasthenes, Arrian and Justin about ancient contacts between Greece and India. It was just as well, for as things developed I was obliged to establish and promote contacts at the levels of archaeology and antiquity, where India was freely acknowledged as a familiar friend from the distant past, one with whom the quest for knowledge could be pursued from where it was left centuries ago.

The whirligig of politics brought the Greek military regime into being in April 1967, prior to which the country was ruled by the King and his domineering mother. The misdeeds of both of them had generated a widespread desire among the people for a republican form of government. The King had planned to hold general elections in May 1967 and thereafter to impose his own military dictatorship with royalists in the armed forces, in anticipation of the electoral results being inconclusive! But the military junta had beaten the King to it, declaring that there was no need for elections and had taken over the Government and purged the royalists. And the King ran away to Italy, where he was maintained at the Greek taxpayer's expense. The military regime under the leadership of Colonel Papadopoulos had been wooing the King to return on its terms and the King was reluctant. The

regime appeared to need the support of the Church and the financial backing of the USA to maintain itself in power, when I arrived in Athens.

Prime Minister Papadopoulos was also the Foreign Minister, and when I called on him he explained that the main danger facing Greece from within and without was the threat of communism. Actually, the Greek communists had not been able to recover from the defeat inflicted on them after the war, when Tito had withdrawn his support after his quarrel with Stalin. I could not see in 1970 an internal threat from them or any external threat from communism. It was a good enough reason to be a member of NATO, which had missile and naval bases in Greece. But the threat to Greece was really from a fellow member of NATO, Turkey, its natural enemy, as every Greek in the street knew. Two years earlier in 1968 they had been very close to war over Cyprus and though they had temporarily patched up their differences, the future of Turkish enclaves remained uncertain in Cyprus, where Greek and Turkish troops faced each other, separated only by a small U N peace-keeping force.

The military regime claimed to work for the restoration of democracy at its own pace by first setting up democratic farming cooperatives, then holding trade union elections, thereafter municipal elections and finally parliamentary elections. It was a familiar form of guided democracy, which was considered necessary in order to prevent a return to "the pitiful parody of democracy under the King". In ancient Greece the pendulum oscillated between oligarchy and democracy, between discipline and licence, between tyranny and anarchy, and between government of the few and government of the many. The Greeks had tried to find the mean, and when they did had never been able to maintain it for long, the mean being a condition in which the entire people were capable of behaving in a "heroic" manner, i.e., with discipline, reason and honour. The average Greek even today expected these periodic oscillations from civilian to military rule and back again, and did not regard the military junta as an irredeemable curse.

There were no signs of military regimentation or police repression. Life seemed normal and free of restrictions. Neither the workers nor the students were restive after four years of military rule. Press censorship was relaxed and the bulk of political prisoners had been released. There was the atmosphere of an economic boom, and the military government employed a large number of lawyers, intellectuals, economists and other professional persons. Its chief spokesman was an ex-communist! The disgruntled elements were those who had pre-

viously tasted and enjoyed political power, patronage and privilege, and they were in disarray without leadership, grudgingly admitting the success of the regime's pragmatic policies. There were more of external than internal pressures for a return to parliamentary democracy, which would inevitably come back with the swing of the pendulum. Many Grecks would agree with T.S. Eliot – "the way forward is the way back", for they were painfully conscious of the fact that they had given birth to western civilization, and their maternal responsibility weighed heavily on them.

The role of Greece as the mother of western civilization took me to the Department of Antiquities, whose Director General was the renowned Professor Marinatos, also President of the Academy of Science. He was an authority on the Minoan civilization of Crete and was then engaged on excavations in the island of Santorini, which, it is believed, contains clues to the fabled Atlantis. He warmly welcomed my idea of closer relations with our Department of Archaeology through exchanges of visits, ceramics, coins, etc., and I pursued these ideas with B.B. Lal, our Director General. In Greece the Department of Antiquities was in a commanding position in getting the resources it needed, because it was the main earner of foreign exchange from tourism. According to Marinatos, we had an archaelogical treasure house underground and for want of funds we had done little to maintain our excavated sites or to undertake new excavations. We had not yet understood the link between tourism and archaeology, and I urged our Government in vain to follow the good example of Greece in this field.

I was asked at every level when we intended to establish a resident Indian Embassy at Athens. Greece had an Embassy in New Delhi since our independence. The common question addressed to me by most Greeks was: Why did we have an Embassy in unfriendly Ankara, and not one in friendly Athens? I strongly pressed our Government to set up an Embassy in Athens soon. Neither financial nor political considerations were relevant any longer, and it was late enough for us to reciprocate the deep and popular sentiments in Greece. But it took us several years more to establish our Embassy in Athens.

10.

AUSTRIA

My transfer to Austria in 1972 was ordained by the powers in New Delhi for no special reason, except that I was free, able and willing, and was in addition acceptable to our Department of Atomic Energy whom I was to represent on the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at Vienna. It enabled me, while on leave in India, to visit the various establishments of atomic energy from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and it gave a tremendous boost to my national ego to meet our scientists and see their marvellous accomplishments. I had known Homi Bhabha briefly in New York in the 1950s when we were engaged in drafting the statute of the IAEA and I came to acquire a new respect for his vision, conception and implementation of his ideas so beautifully manifested in the many places I visited. His early death in an air crash on Mont Blanc was an untimely and irreparable loss to India, and whenever I have flown over the scene of his crash, I have thought of his body being entombed in ice for all time in one of the glaciers.

I went to the seat of the empire of the Hapsburgs, the capital city of Vienna, with its surviving imperial splendour and grandeur in its noble buildings. Metternich had said, "Asia begins at the road out of Vienna to the east"; it was not true, for it does not in fact begin until after it has crossed the Urals! Going to Austria was like a trip into the past to a Baroque civilization, superficial and sterile with a hopeless frivolity that expressed itself in the despairing romance and lilting music of Franz Lehar and Johann Strauss. It was said with a broken heart that to be "Austrian" was to be cosmopolitan or nondescript! I thought it was an eminently suitable place for one's last posting in the diplomatic service, and decided to make the most of it before the rigours of retirement in India.

I visited its distant Alpine Province first, Tyrol, which claimed to be the oldest democracy in Europe. The Provincial government elected by the Assembly is required by the constitution to reflect its repre-

sentation, and is always a coalition of political parties, even when the People's Party in Tyrol had a clear majority. This interesting constitutional requirement is for the sake of preserving political peace, and is typically Austrian democracy at work. Every foreign official visitor is told how after the First World War by the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, Austria was obliged to cede South Tyrol to Italy as a prize for its collaboration with the Allied Powers. It is no longer a live political issue, but it still rankles in every Tyrolese breast north or south of the Italian border. Tyrol is flooded throughout the year with hordes of Italian, German and other tourists, and the Tyrolese quietly suffer them for the money they bring.

Lower Austria is the Province that surrounds Vienna on all sides and is the country's largest Province with a population second only to that of Vienna. It came under Russian military occupation under the Yalta agreement and suffered much material damage owing to confiscation of its industries, plants, etc. It has a long frontier with Czechoslovakia with barbed wire fences, watch towers, etc. The land across the frontier had once belonged to Austria, but after the last war Austrians living there were driven out and their lands taken over by Czechoslovakia. Compensation for this large-scale confiscation was still under discussion and was the main obstacle to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Provincial Government was a coalition, though the Socialist Party had a majority in the Assembly.

Burgenland, the wine-making country, was the next Province visited. It was administered by Hungary for 300 years until 1921, when as a result of a plebiscite it joined Austria. This Province too was under Russian military occupation until 1955; the presence of 4 Russian Divisions in Hungary was very worrying for Austria, as Vienna was extremely vulnerable to a determined thrust across the easy terrain. The Russian General in Budapest confirmed to me that there was nothing in the sense of military obstacles before Vienna, and indeed he said his tanks could go easily across the Danubian plains to reach the Adriatic Sea in 24 hours! Austria expects its neutral status to act as an effective deterrent, and the Soviet Union equally expects Austrian neutrality to be scrupulously maintained. In Burgenland the Provincial cabinet was a coalition with the Socialist Party and the People's Party sharing the honours equally, reflecting the equal representation of farmers and steel workers. This is where Haydn, the composer, was born and composed the tune for Lord Nelson, the Nelson Mass, and also the tune of the infamous "Deutschland uber alles".

The Province of Upper Austria had been under Russian occupation north of the Danube and the rest under US military occupation. Substantial amounts of Marshall Plan Aid were pumped into this Province to help rebuild its industries and rehabilitate its farmlands. India has had collaboration for several years with the iron and steel plant in this Province that manufactures machines for laying railway lines. The political situation was not without interest. In the Provincial Assembly the Socialist Party had 23 seats and the People's Party had an equal number of seats. The Austrian electorate seems to favour this sort of balanced representation as a precaution against dramatic legislative changes, taxation and domination by any one Party. It makes for preservation of the status quo, and for negotiated terms for social peace between the workers and the employers. The Czechoslovak frontier was completely closed and heavily guarded on the other side. There was concern on this side over the vulnerability of eastern Austria to a Russian pincer movement from Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Here too Austrian neutrality was regarded as its best defence. On the cultural front, in architecture, there was ample evidence of the grandeur of Austrian baroque and of the occasional explosion of ecclesiastical fervour into fine and delicate Austrian rococo.

Salzburg of the music festivals was the most famous of the Provinces visited by me. Ex-Nazis and former Austro-Fascists were strongly entrenched here; they were all fervent Roman Catholics now and felt pious enough to dismiss their sinful past as a minor aberration. And they suffered with quiet condescension vulgar American tourists who flocked together to quench their thirst for culture and to see where the film "The Sound of Music" was made. As was to be expected, the Provincial Assembly had a comfortable margin in favour of the Conservatives. The Catholics here were probably more Catholic than the Pope. The former rulers of Salzberg, its Prince-Bishops, were bent on exorcising the egalitarian devilry of the Reformation through excessive ritual, which in architecture resulted in baroque ostentation and later in the exquisite flowering of rococo that reminded me of wedding cakes. More than architecture, music held sway in Salzburg. Fortunately, the composers of the baroque and rococo periods did not try to emulate in music the architectural modes of that time. Mozart was born here and Karajan lived here and Zubin Mehta was a frequent guest conductor. And Indian trainees in hotel management were everywhere and well-liked. There was then and perhaps still is in Salzburg the soft afterglow of tradition and history, the music of the ages and the cultured sensualism of its people, which were invincible attractions for

tourists. Austrian neutrality assumed here a condition of serene repose, epitomizing the belief that equilibrium rested on a balance between extremes, an equilibrium that in Salzburg seemed to perpetuate itself.

In Vienna, which is a Province by itself, on the outer gate of the Hofburg there is this inscription in Latin: "Justitia Regnorum Fundamentum" (Justice is the basis of Government), the motto of the later Hapsburgs, whose end was probably due to this dictum having been honoured more in its breach than observance. The Austria of today is governed by the studied maintenance of internal and external equilibrium necessitated by the categorical imperative of its neutrality, which is guaranteed by international treaty. There is, therefore, little public discussion of foreign policy, and foreign relations are regulated with an eye to their being balanced. Within the limits prescribed by its neutrality, Austria has displayed impressive versatility in the development of its foreign economic relations, in taking positions on international questions and in playing a positive role in UN peace-keeping and in the larger issues that have a global dimension, such as environment, outer space, energy, refugees, etc. It has successfully managed to be culturally, economically and politically a part of the western world, without giving cause for Soviet concern about its neutrality.

The Chancellor of Austria in my time was Bruno Kreisky of the Socialist Party, and he told me of Austria's eternal gratitude to Jawaharlal Nehru for his efforts to get the Soviet Union to agree to Austrian neutrality as the *quid pro quo* for Russian military withdrawal from Austria. Kreisky said that direct bilateral talks between Austria and the USSR had gone so far and no farther and had become stalemated. The sticking point was the Soviet Union's insistence on its right to re-introduce its troops into Austria if neutrality should not be observed. It was over this issue that Nehru's good offices were sought. Nehru had come down strongly in favour of the independence and unconditional neutrality of Austria as the right basis for the future of peace in Europe, and had explained his reasons to Khrushchev. In April 1955 the Soviet Union withdrew its condition of re-entry of troops and agreed to the Treaty. Nehru's role in this important question is generally not known in India; I could well imagine Nehru pointing out to Khrushchev the impact of the unilateral return to Austria of Soviet troops on non-aligned nations, as well as on the post-Stalinist image of the Soviet Union.

By 1974 I had come to feel that Austria had voluntarily imposed on herself a degree of self-restraint in foreign affairs that was dictated by

undue concern about possible Soviet reaction. In internal affairs I sensed among the people the feeling that no party should be allowed to gain an absolute majority in Parliament! The Foreign Minister of Austria Rudolf Kirchschlager in a speech on 30 July 1973 about the third world had some home truths to say which are worth repetition: that developing countries had been displaying an alarmingly acquisitive interest in the affluence of the developed countries and employing their majority as a political weapon, which may be counter-productive, and that there was a growing feeling not only in Austria but elsewhere in Europe that developing countries wanted others to go on giving aid endlessly, as if in expiation of their past sins! He was right of course, and, but for his Roman Catholicism, he might have added that aid should be tied to effective control of population growth.

As it happened, Vienna was not destined to be my last posting. I was phoned in March 1974 by Avtar Singh who was in charge of administration in New Delhi and informed that I was being moved to New York as the Permanent Representative of India to the UN and I should plan to get there by the end of June. He added that my wife who was then in India had been consulted and had agreed, and that initially the posting would be until the end of 1976. I was also told that the alternative considered was Moscow but my wife had expressed a preference for the U N. The matter seemed to be completely out of my hands, and I was glad that the choice had not been left to me. The UN was certainly a greater challenge, for it tackled a variety of problems of global reach, and I was quite familiar with the *modus operandi*. In the midst of my farewell calls and other such formalities, something sudden but not unexpected took place and occupied my attention for some more time.

India's Explosion

On 18 May 1974 India detonated a nuclear device underground in the Rajasthan desert with an explosive yield of over 10 kilotons. It was fabricated by Indian scientists, and the facilities and materials used were Indian and outside international safeguards. There was no violation of any international treaty or agreement. The explosion created an underground cavity and the radioactivity released was totally contained. The local geology was sand, clay and shale and they were compressed into a dense compact mass so that radioactivity was trapped inside and there was no venting. The explosion was a test

conceived and conducted exclusively for peaceful purposes. The Prime Minister of India on 2 August 1972 and again on 15 November 1973 had informed Parliament that the Government was considering the use of the technology of nuclear explosive engineering for purposes of economic benefit and would be conducting tests underground. As early as March 1970 an Indian scientist Chidambaram had informed a panel meeting of the IAEA at Vienna of India's interest in the use of nuclear explosives for a variety of peaceful purposes. This technology had been tested by the USA, the USSR, the UK and France and the results obtained were encouraging and justified intensification of testing.

In these circumstances, the Indian explosion should not have surprised any country that had followed the proceedings of the Indian Parliament, but there was an uproar especially in the USA and Canada. They claimed that India had used materials and facilities supplied by them for making the device and although their claims were proved to be groundless, they chose to restrict their further cooperation with India in the field of generation of nuclear energy in such a manner as to hurt us economically. There were insinuations that India was going to manufacture nuclear weapons. At a Board meeting of the IAEA I explained our position and reaffirmed India's intention of not making nuclear weapons but using nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes. If India had wanted to make nuclear weapons, it would not have advertised its plan with an explosion. Our explosion, on the contrary, was necessary for research into its application for peaceful purposes. I challenged the scientists to deny that it was possible to make nuclear bombs without carrying out a single explosion. Ours was a permissible peaceful nuclear explosion of the kind that other States had been conducting, and no one had given a valid reason that it was not so. It would be tragic indeed to read more meaning into the Indian explosion than was warranted by its peaceful character. American over-reaction to it was rather like that of a person straining at a gnat after having swallowed a camel! The hullabaloo subsided eventually, but I am sorry that we did not continue underground testing in other kinds of terrain for other peaceful purposes. Our explosion continued to engage my attention for a few months in the USA after I arrived there at the end of June 1974 to represent India at the United Nations.

A Postscript to Vienna

Early in 1973 I was tipped off by Amouzegar of Iran, Hammadi of Iraq and Atiqi of Kuwait about the likelihood of the price of oil being hiked up soon by OPEC. They were Ministers of Oil and I had known them at the UN, and evidently this friendly tip given by each of them separately in Vienna was to alert us to enter into advance commitments at current prices. I had dutifully passed on this piece of valuable information to my Ministry, which in turn had transmitted it to the "concerned" Ministry, one of whose junior officials wrote to me a pedestrian letter seeking the identity of my source of information, for he had it on the good authority of American Oil companies that the price of oil would not be allowed to go up! Needless to say, his letter remained unanswered. The ways of our bureaucracy are not inscrutable; they are entirely predictable and congenitally incorrigible.

Netaji

Although I did not have the good luck to meet Netaji, I met many persons in Burma and Malaya who had served with him. Evidently, he was a giant among men and possessed the charisma and intellectual integrity that moved men to follow him and aspire to noble ends and perform great deeds under the most adverse of circumstances. I believed that his decision to join forces with the Axis Powers was justifiable in the conditions then prevailing. The war situation was extremely unfavourable for the Allied Powers in 1940-41. It seemed very likely that after the aerial blitz Hitler would order his armies to invade England with every prospect of over-running it after a stiff fight. The British had planned to carry on the war from Canada with US help. If Japan had invaded India immediately after its conquest of Burma in early 1942, there was little that the British forces in India could have done to stop it.

In the light of such dire possibilities, Bose might have deemed it expedient to save India, as Burmese leaders had saved Burma, by collaborating with the Axis Powers on his terms. When he escaped from India, relations between Germany and USSR were friendly and based on the Non-Aggression Pact of 1939. Bose could not have foreseen then that Hitler would change his mind and decide not to invade England but throw the German armed might against the USSR. Nor could he have expected Japan to delay its attack on India by over a year. His expectation was the defeat of England and the collapse of British power in India under Japanese invasion. That seemed probable in 1941-42, and I had used these arguments in my Burma intelligence

cell in Simla to explain Bose's decision. It was my opinion that neither Bose nor Burmese leaders should be shot on sight, as was then planned, by British forces on their return to Burma, and made martyrs. My British Colonel was of the same view, and it was Mountbatten who later reversed the hard-line British policy on Bose. Perhaps it was just as well that Bose died in an air accident.

Bose was in Berlin by January 1942, according to P.B. Sharma, my German interpreter in our Embassy in Vienna. He was then a chemistry student in Berlin and worked for Bose on Azad Hind Radio. Bose seems to have met Hitler twice and sensed that he was filled with unrequited love for England, and was not interested in helping Bose in the beginning. Later, when Hitler realised he could not come to terms with Churchill, he asked Ribbentrop to help Bose in raising, training and arming an Indian Legion from the prisoners of war. The strength of the Legion rose to 3500 men. It manned a section of the Atlantic Wall, and was also deployed on an island off the Dutch coast and near Bordeaux in France. It was involved in the fighting in the first and second Allied invasion, and was in action against US, British and French forces. It is a pity that so little is known about this lost Legion.

11.

THE UNITED NATIONS AGAIN

Two dominant impressions have remained with me about my return to the UN in 1974. The first was the visual impact of the colours in the Delegates' Lounge; black was overwhelmingly present and out of all proportion to the colour distribution among the world's population, but quite in keeping with the States' membership of the UN. For example, 56 black States had a population of 500 million, whereas 30 white States had a population of 1050 million, 17 brown States had 1430 million and 6 yellow States had 1250 million. In the UN at any rate the yellow peril was absent! The whites took it badly, because once upon a time not so long ago they were everywhere, and now the blacks were lording it over, although it seemed to me that they had merely taken refuge at the UN. This comment on colour is not intended to be unserious; it is a reflection of the success of decolonization and also of the political idiocy of admitting every former colony as a full voting member of the UN, thus equating Nigeria with Comoros. U Thant as UN Secretary-General had anticipated the advent of a flood of micro States and had suggested a sensible practical solution for them, but it was not acceptable to those who saw sovereignty only in the right to vote, despite the General Assembly being without any effective power. Such is the illusion of tyranny of the powerless black majority!

But what of the powerful white American minority? That was the other dominant impression of mine in 1974. It was not so much the inevitable loss of the many votes USA once commanded when the UN was an instrument of American foreign policy, but rather the inexplicable loss of American morale consequent on finding itself in a minority. From the American creation it once was, the UN had suddenly become an American dilemma. The USA did not know how to cope with the coloured majority in the General Assembly, known as the Town Meeting of the World, that did not have the power to implement its decisions. The seat of real American power was in the Security Council, where USA could, if it so desired, use its right of veto

in such a manner as to make of the American dream a demi-reality at best. But I was baffled by the neurotic American reaction to being relegated to the role of the opposition in the General Assembly, which was designed to be no more than a talk shop, a sounding board, or a theatre. It did not really matter whether or not a State belonged to the majority or minority. The General Assembly was a forum for political debate, for testing out proposals, for adopting non-binding resolutions, and a safety valve for release of frustrations. I had never before seen American prestige so low in its own estimation, nor had I seen its isolation made such a big issue in its domestic politics. I had expected the US delegation to debate the issues, and not rant, rail and revile at the third world for behaving different from the so-called free world. But I had a nagging suspicion that there was a good reason for the dramatics.

It was certainly a most interesting moment for my return to the UN, for there were more irritants in store for the USA. The Arabs had been riding high since the price of oil was jacked up, and the Western countries and Japan had begun to feel the pinch, and had started thinking seriously of counter-measures, alternatives, etc. The leverage of oil, if it had been employed collectively by the producers, might have yielded some political concessions for resolving the Arab-Israeli problem, but the producers were divided over the use of oil as a political weapon and the utilization of their substantial revenues. Many preferred to invest their earnings from the West in the West and became even more tied to it. Some Arab States supplied their oil at concessional rates only to Islamic countries. On the whole, the Arabs did not cover themselves with glory. But they mustered enough voting strength and support during the 29th General Assembly to endorse the rights of Palestinians. That Assembly took two other decisions which contributed further to American isolation, namely, the rejection of the credentials of the South African delegation and its exclusion from participation, and the adoption of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States.

Palestine

The Palestine question had been last before the UN in 1948 and since then Israeli propaganda had created the impression in the public mind that the Palestinian people were no more than Arab refugees awaiting settlement in Arab countries. The fact had been gradually erased from

public consciousness that Israel had started its career as a national home or enclave in Palestine for Jewish refugees from Europe after the First World War, when Palestine was placed under British trusteeship administration. At the end of the Second World War the British administration sought to end its trusteeship by asking the UN to take over Palestine. Eventually, Palestine was partitioned by the UN into two independent States – Arab Palestine and Israel – and in the course of three wars Israel occupied by force the whole of Palestine and more. It was American veto support of Israel in the UN Security Council that effectively saved Israel from UN sanctions. It is interesting, however, to recall that in March 1948 at a special session of the General Assembly the USA proposed a UN trusteeship agreement for Palestine, according to which the UN itself would administer Palestine through the Trusteeship Council until the people, i.e., Arabs and Jews, reached agreement regarding the future government of their country.

After 26 years the Palestine question was reopened at the UN by Algeria in 1974 following the oil price rise and the Algiers summit meeting of non-aligned States, which set the stage for "restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people and recovery of their usurped homeland from Israel". To that end the USSR had been advocating the convening of a conference in Geneva of all concerned parties, while the USA had been urging a step-by-step approach towards a peace settlement. The General Assembly, under the Presidency of Algeria in the person of Bouteflika, by a large majority granted the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) the status of Observer, endorsed the national rights of the Palestinian people, established a Committee on Palestine for securing their rights and gave Arafat the protocol treatment normally reserved for a Head of State. These decisions greatly upset the US administration which was under heavy pressure from American Jewry, but one good result of the exposure of the PLO to the UN was its discovery that there was no majority in the UN for the abolition of Israel. I was India's representative on the Committee on Palestine, of which the PLO was a member, and the Committee's first report in fact reaffirmed Israel's right to exist as a State and the PLO was a party to that report. However, the USA for its own reasons prevented that report's discussion in the Security Council.

South Africa

The second blow to the USA was the rejection by the General Assembly of the credentials of the South African delegation by another large majority, and its unprecedented consequence. During the preceding four years the credentials of South Africa had also been rejected, but the Presidents of those General Assembly sessions had ruled that the rejection was tantamount to condemnation of South Africa's racist policies, and not deprivation of its right of participation. But in 1974 the President of the session was Bouteflika who departed from precedent in ruling that rejection of the credentials of a delegation meant that its participation was impermissible. He accordingly excluded South Africa from the 29th session, although his ruling did not affect its continued membership of the UN. The USA challenged his ruling, and the challenge was defeated by as large a majority as the rejection of credentials. It would have been clearly anomalous for the General Assembly to allow a delegation to participate after rejecting its credentials. A distinction was rightly made between such non-participation, and expulsion or suspension of a State which would have required the consent of the Security Council.

Bouteflika's ruling was in tune with the majority's views. For 22 years in the past the USA had used its majority support to keep out of the UN the People's Republic of China, and now an African-Asian majority was preventing the participation of South Africa. I doubt if the USA shed any tears over South Africa's non-participation; its principal concern was over the possibility of similar treatment of Israel by rejection of its credentials, and the air was thick with dire warnings that in such an event the USA would withdraw from the UN! The case of Israel was very different from that of South Africa, where a racist minority of 4 million whites had imposed its rule on an African majority of 20 million, and a delegation of whites can hardly claim to represent the people of that country. The State of Israel was a creation of the UN, and there was no question of the legitimacy of its government, however deplorable its actions might be against the Palestinians. Although Israel's credentials were not questioned, its policies towards Palestinians were condemned as racist the following year.

New Economic Order

The third blow to the USA was struck by the Latin American group, when the General Assembly adopted the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States by a massive majority. The USA had strong objections to the provisions in the Charter concerning nationalization of foreign investments, payment of compensation, etc. The Charter was not legally binding, as it was not a Treaty, and American distress was explained by its inability to influence the Latins to allow more time for reaching a negotiated consensus. On the other hand, the Latins felt that no amount of extra time would have produced acceptable compromises, for the clash was over ideologies relating to a country's rights of ownership and disposal of its natural resources. The confrontation started with the OPEC decision in October 1973 to increase the oil price, and became worse at the sixth special session of the UN General Assembly in April 1974, which adopted the so-called new international economic order, that was favourable for developing countries, but doom-laden for developed countries.

All this was anathema for the USA and Western countries, which consequently reacted with great vigour against the Afro-Asian-Latin American majority spearheaded by Algeria, Iran and Venezuela. It had the effect eventually of splitting the majority into OPEC countries and non-OPEC countries. The latter found themselves victims of a double squeeze, having to pay more for oil and even more for imports from Western countries, and they formed their own group to protect their interests. Finally, at the seventh special session in September 1975 the militancy of OPEC dissipated itself, the defiance of developed States crumbled, and the anguished pleas of developing countries were met with promises of negotiated settlements of their problems. The problems remain and are more acute; the negotiations continue without end; the solutions recede further. South-South cooperation is more a question than an answer.

Cyprus

Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 to resolve the problem of Turkish enclaves by unifying them by force, and the General Assembly heard all the parties concerned before taking a decision. There were a large number of Turkish enclaves separated from one another and widely scattered all over the island of Cyprus, which had a Greek majority population. The enclaves had been untenable and unviable in a Greek ambience even during British colonial rule, and since then a section of the Greeks in Cyprus had been advocating its enosis (union) with Greece, the motherland, to the consternation of the Turkish popula-

tion. The eastern part of Cyprus closer to Turkey had a Turkish majority, which had been pressing for its union with Turkey. Archbishop Makarios, the President of Cyprus, had been holding the island together since independence with the help of a UN Peacekeeping Force under an Indian General. There developed a threat to the leadership of Makarios from the Greek unionists in 1974 in the form of a coup, and the Turkish army decided to intervene to protect the Turkish population. The invasion was a military success. It prompted the population of Turkish enclaves to evacuate with their belongings to the Turkish-occupied zone in the east, and the island was de facto partitioned.

It fell to India and me in particular to draft a resolution for the General Assembly, and I invited Egypt, Guyana, Mali and Yugoslavia to co-sponsor it. The actual drafting was done by me and the Ambassador of Yugoslavia Jaksa Petric, and each draft had to be cleared by the co-sponsors and then shown for comments to Turkey, Greece, Cyprus (Makarios) and Denktash, the spokesman for Turkish Cypriots. I had lost count of the number of re-drafts in the light of the comments offered by the various parties and time was running out, and the President of the General Assembly Bouteflika was pressing for results. The main elements in the draft resolution were a cease fire, its supervision by the UN Force, initiation under UN auspices of talks between Turkish and Greek Cypriots about the future government of Cyprus, and the withdrawal of the Turkish Force. The draft had become in its 15th version too lengthy and overburdened with preambular paragraphs, which in fact had been the focal points of controversy. And so I decided to shorten it by retaining only the operative paragraphs and slaughtering the preambles or rendering them anodyne. In giving this new and final version to the four parties, I made it clear that it was on a take it or leave it basis, and if it was unacceptable, the co-sponsors would act unilaterally thereafter.

The next morning at the UN I was informed that Turkey, Turkish Cypriots and Greece had no negative comments to offer, and I was on my way to telephone Makarios, when I ran into the Ambassador of Greece who informed me that "the President" had also found it acceptable. I assumed he meant President Makarios and, therefore, tabled the draft resolution and disappeared into one of the private rooms to compose my statement for introducing the resolution. When I reappeared in the Lounge, the Greek Cypriots were after my blood for tabling the resolution without obtaining clearance from Makarios! The Ambassador of Greece was present and I turned to him and said,

"You told me an hour ago that the President had found it acceptable. Do you deny it?" His reply was "No, but I meant President Bouteflika." Why would I be interested in Bouteflika's views? I went straight to Archbishop Makarios, related the entire story and asked him as to what I should do. He smiled and said, "I see the hand of God in this misunderstanding. Go ahead and introduce your draft resolution. My delegation will vote for it." The Cyprus resolution was then adopted unanimously. But for the misunderstanding for which the gracious Archbishop blamed God and not me, there might have been no decision, for until then the standard behaviour pattern had been for the Greeks to reject what the Turks accepted, and vice versa. It goes without saying that generous compliments were heaped on me by one and all for my happy misunderstanding, but I said to myself that I should be more careful in future, for there was not another President who was an Archbishop. That notorious resolution came to be implemented, not fully but mostly. The Turkish Force has not yet completely withdrawn to Turkey. The cease fire has been in force. The UN Peacekeeping Force has become a semi-permanent feature of life in Cyprus, and the threat of its withdrawal alone may compel the parties to sink their differences. The talks between the two communities in Cyprus—Greeks and Turks—will otherwise go on seemingly forever without any result, like the cat-and-dog existence of a maladjusted married couple who can neither separate nor live together in peace!

India's Explosion

The underground explosion of the Indian nuclear device for peaceful purposes in the Rajasthan desert in May 1974 had a delayed fallout six months later at the UN General Assembly session, where Pakistan tabled a draft resolution declaring in principle South Asia as a nuclear weapon free zone. We opposed it on the ground that it was not proper for an outside body such as the UN arbitrarily to declare a particular part of the world as a nuclear weapon free zone. Such matters should be left to the initiative of the States of the region to consult each other and then decide, taking into account their special concerns and the geographical extent of coverage. We tabled our own draft resolution in these general terms. Both resolutions were adopted with large majorities, ours obtaining 8 more votes than Pakistan's. The purpose of this exercise, which is repeated annually, has been singularly futile. India had voluntarily refrained from carrying out any more peaceful

nuclear explosions underground, despite opposing for reasons of principle the concept of South Asia as a nuclear weapon free zone. India's self-imposed restraint had only spurred Pakistan to enrich uranium to weapons grade and in other ways to develop the technology of nuclear bomb-making without staging an explosion. In retrospect it would seem that India might well have continued further research into nuclear explosive testing underground for peaceful purposes.

Outside the United Nations I was asked by the US Council on Foreign Relations to speak on "The Indian perspective on nuclear proliferation". It was a well-attended luncheon meeting and there were scientists, senators, diplomats and scholars. During the question period there was interest only in our underground explosion, and while it was easy enough to defend our position on peaceful nuclear explosions, nuclear weapon free zones, international inspection and non-signature of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, it was difficult to answer questions about our future intentions, except to refer to every Indian Prime Minister's declaration that India did not intend to make nuclear weapons. If the problem was one of trust in our Government's declarations, I said, it was not a matter of subjective assessment, for our objective record of adhering to our word was as good as the USA's. At this point I received unexpected help from the floor from the famous American scientist I. I. Rabi who had collaborated in making the American atomic bomb. He said, "Mr. Ambassador, you probably do not know that if India had wanted to make the atomic bomb, it could have done so in the 1950s. Homi Bhabha, whom I knew, was one of three scientists flown out from Cambridge University during the war to work here on the Manhattan project. And in 1957 he supplied Indian heavy water to Belgium. Mr. Nehru and his successors have shown a remarkable degree of principled self-restraint. I have no difficulty in accepting your Government's statement."

Another surprise was an invitation from Senator Edward Kennedy, Chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, to address his Committee on nuclear non-proliferation. I did so without realizing that it was a public hearing and open to the press. I was not unaware of the irony that I would be speaking on non- proliferation in the very chambers where all American nuclear weapons were authorized. My appearance was covered by Warren Unna in *The Statesman* of 11 April, 1975, who said, "the audience composed of critics of India's explosion surprisingly gave Rikhi Jaipal a loud applause after his speech." I did not receive the impression that any of the US Congressmen considered India as a threat to international

peace, or as likely to plunge the world into a nuclear holocaust. In reply to questions, I said, India would not join a nuclear weapon free zone that included only some of its neighbours and excluded others which might threaten its security. Also, that it was unthinkable that India would transfer to any State the technology of nuclear explosive devices. To yet another question I responded that the world would have to be satisfied with our unilateral declaration that we would not make nuclear arms, and there could be no question of converting it into a legally binding international obligation, considering that we did not even have a unilateral declaration from the USA that it would not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States!

The Harvard University journal *International Security* asked me to contribute an article on "The Indian Nuclear Situation", which I did. Congressman Clarence Long joined issue with his opinion that there was no difference between a peaceful nuclear explosive and a nuclear weapon, that underdeveloped countries with nuclear weapons would be more likely to use them than the superpowers, and that prevention of horizontal proliferation was, therefore, more urgently necessary. I responded by pointing out that sterilization of the impotent would not solve the problem of overpopulation. Mr. Long prophetically raised the question: "Once Pakistan tests its own nuclear explosive in response to India's test, how long will India stick to its voluntary restraint?" History will have to reply to the Congressman.

Zionism is Racism

The General Assembly session of 1975 in the Third Committee adopted by a two-thirds majority a draft resolution sponsored by Arab and some other Moslem States declaring that "zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination". India voted for it and I took the decision to do so, as there was little time to seek instructions from the Government. Our vote was the subject of some criticism from Indian political circles usually receptive to advice and influence from the USA and Israel, which had chosen to interpret the vote as anti-Jewish. My Ministry even called for an explanation from me, and when I sent the voting record and the history of this particular issue, it was clear that we could not have taken any other position without serious damage to our credibility and consistency. India was a party to the documents of the fourth non-aligned summit at Algiers in September 1973, which had equated zionism with settler colonialism and racism in Southern

Africa, and the same year the General Assembly of the UN had condemned "the unholy alliance between South African racism and zionism".

The reasons for this equation were: Israel's occupation of Arab territories, settling European immigrant Jews there, its dispossession of Arab homes and properties, and treatment of Arab inhabitants as second class citizens subjected to various forms of discrimination. The Israeli Law of Return – the ingathering of Jews from all over the world – entitled any Jew from anywhere to displace non-Jews from Palestine and establish there a Judenstaat, a Jewish State. This is the core of the ideology of zionism evolved by Theodore Herzl for Jewish refugees from European countries. The righting of Europe's wrong done to Jewish victims by inflicting the same wrong on Palestinian Arabs is unlikely to be acceptable to most non-aligned States. The Lima Non-aligned Declaration of August 1975 called on all countries "to oppose zionism, this racist imperialist ideology". In the light of these developments it was hardly surprising that the General Assembly should have adopted two months later the resolution equating zionism with racism.

However, in deference to the American public's sensitivities that had been roused to near hysteria by the media, the Ambassadors of Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia and India decided to explore the possibility of delaying a vote in the plenary on the zionism resolution. As a result of extensive consultations with the Arabs, it seemed possible to find a procedural way out so as to assuage American public opinion, which had begun to make its impact on the US administration. But at the last minute US Ambassador Moynihan requested me to abandon our well-meant efforts, as the USA wanted to force a vote on the zionism resolution! This volte face was motivated by political reasons: the zionist campaign in the USA had reached such feverish proportions that a deferment of the vote in the Plenary would have been anti-climactic. The campaign was sustained for electoral reasons (Moynihan went to the Senate) and also for financial reasons (Israel collected substantial contributions from American Jewry). We learnt later that Kissinger had been unaware of our efforts at amelioration, and that Moynihan had acted on his own authority. In doing so his action was entirely consistent with the wishes of the sponsors of the zionism resolution! Moynihan was not wrong in calling the UN "the theatre of the absurd", for his act was the absurdest of all, though not without applause or profit!

It was during this campaign that the Jewish Defence League sent a few threats to me to change my vote, a common enough practice then for the wild-eyed young zionists. I ignored the threats, and was rewarded with a hand grenade attack on our Mission on East 64th Street. One grenade was flung into my room when I wan in, and it failed to explode. Another went right through the open windows to the courtyard and produced a muffled sneeze, and the third turned out to be a dud. Two bearded hooligans with skull caps charged into the ground floor, broke up some furniture and roughed up our security guard. They left their visiting card promising another more successful visit. A complaint to the US Mission to the UN yielded the customary disbelief and nonchalance!

Pakistan

The Pakistan delegation never failed to find an opportunity at every General Assembly session to comment that it was prepared to find a solution for the Kashmir question in the spirit of the Simla Agreement and in conformity with UN resolutions, to which Pakistan was a party. It was no more than an annual irritant to see if India would rise to the bait and exercise its right of reply, so that Pakistan might then react to our reply and hopefully drag us into a sterile debate on a plebiscite. This exercise generally bored the other states into a frigid silence, and the verbal exchanges between the two countries would putter away into a cease fire. During one session I decided that I would simply let Pakistan soliloquize and ignore its intervention. My own officers thoroughly disapproved of my tactical silence, lest it should be misinterpreted. However, I had my way in that I did not reply at once to Pakistan and waited to see the reactions.

Pakistan felt slighted and sounded my officers as to my ulterior motive in remaining silent. The members of Parliament in our delegation were appalled at my naivete, and Indian press correspondents insisted that non-reply would be a virtual change of policy on our part! Eventually, for the sake of the record and towards the end of my statement on another item, I commented briefly in a somewhat lighter mood that Pakistan's reference to a question that was not on the agenda, i.e., Kashmir, was "irrelevant, immaterial and inconsequential", quoting Perry Mason. There was no one in Pakistan's seats to respond to this belated riposte, and this exercise expired ignominiously. But it came back the next year in full cry on both sides; by then I had gone away to other pastures. Self-determination is an obsessive con-

cept and is riddled with contradictions, as there is no agreed definition of "self" and the scope of whatever is to be determined. But it is not permissible for the UN, and it would indeed be a violation of its Charter, to impose this principle on any part of the territory of any of its member States.

Another question that brought out the worst in Indo-Pakistan rivalry was elections to various UN organs, and since defeat was perceived as loss of prestige (real or imagined), lobbying was fierce and sometimes quite unscrupulous. Nehru could not care less whether we won or lost an election, but Krishna Menon used to take it much too seriously for his own peace of mind or that of his colleagues. Indira Gandhi was more composed, though she did not like our undertaking anything unless we were sure of succeeding. However, her personal advisers invariably counselled her, with the best of intentions, not to contest any election to any UN organ, for success would mean having to take sides on issues after the election, and that would needlessly upset one superpower or the other! The top echelon in the Ministry of External Affairs was more concerned with image building, which meant that India should be represented in all UN organs so that jobs might be provided for unsuccessful politicians and otiose diplomats.

In my time India was represented in as many as 30 important UN organs and had the highest representation among Asian States. It was only fair that we should be expected sometimes to yield our seat to another Asian country when our term expired, but unfailingly we used to be instructed to seek re-election automatically. This attitude endeared us to Pakistan, which (and lately China too) would make the grand gesture by giving up their seats to those seeking election. In the circumstances, we lost only a few elections, and once the defeat was engineered by our candidate personally canvassing for himself! A few years later we promised to get him elected on condition that he stayed home, and he did and we won. Lobbying is a delicate art of arranging things by giving a little here and taking a little more there, and it is best left to the people on the spot who have a wider perspective of things. I have generally tried to avoid a straight fight with Pakistan for the same seat, because it nearly always spawned a third candidate who walked away with the prize.

The Indo-Pakistan electoral contest for a seat on the Security Council produced many surprising reactions at different stages. We were the first to announce our candidature after making sure of substantial support within the Asian Group and obtaining the endorsement of the Arab group. Pakistan seemed disinterested until Ambassador Moynihan of the USA (formerly accredited to India) offered to work for its election, if it would enter the contest against India. And so Pakistan did and secured the endorsement of the Islamic Conference. However, Arab, African and Asian votes, split, but the USA assured it of Western Europe's support. When I met Moynihan, he warned me that he was determined to see that India was not on the Security Council in his time! There was nothing personal in this, he said, and the only reason was the political fear that India's presence in the Council would strengthen the non-aligned group there, pull the socialists in its direction, queer the American pitch and make it more difficult for the USA to deal with, or arrange things, with the USSR. I took it as a tribute to India's non-pressurizability. Moynihan could not have been more blunt and frank, if he had drunk a few pegs of whatever made him tick. And then he persuaded Philippines to be the third candidate with a good chance of being elected, if there should be a tie vote between India and Pakistan!

There were several ballots spread over a few days and the votes obtained by India and Pakistan made it clear that each had a blocking margin against the other. There were two schools of opinion in my delegation. The radical school of our young Turks favoured a fight to the finish, which would have resulted in the third candidate being elected, as had happened twice before. The moderate school, to which our M.P.s belonged, wanted the two-year term on the Security Council to be split between India and Pakistan, which would be in violation of the UN Charter. Agha Shahi, the delegate of Pakistan and an old experienced UN hand, met me during the suspension of the balloting to discuss the terms of a deal. He was opposed to the election of the third candidate, and even more strongly opposed to sharing the two-year term, when either country could have two years on the Council, one after the other. Since Pakistan was ahead in the ballots by a lead of six votes, he contended, it should get into the Council first according to established custom. I replied that India having announced its candidacy earlier should have the first chance and not wait for two more years, to which Agha Shahi responded that India had already served on the Council for a much longer period.

I arranged further balloting to gain time and to pick up more votes, but Shahi wanted a deal. The other States were getting fed up and pressing both countries not to waste their time, but agree to any compromise. And so I requested Kuwait and Egypt to mediate informally, and they came up with the deal that Pakistan be allowed to get elected now, and India be endorsed rightaway for next year's vacant

Asian seat. This Arab formula for a compromise was referred to New Delhi and Islamabad, and was acceptable to both capitals. During the final meeting I voted for Pakistan, which joined the Arabs and others in simultaneously endorsing India as the Asian candidate for next year's vacancy. Thus India and Pakistan served together on the Council during one year, by which time Moynihan had elevated himself to the US Senate, and I discovered that what Moynihan had said about India's role in the Security Council was true. No wonder the Americans had got through to the men around Indira Gandhi the message that in our national interests we should not take sides on issues at the UN! When Mrs. Gandhi told me of their advice, I replied that it was better to quit the UN than behave like Samoa.

Farakka

Barely four years after our support for the cause of Bangladesh's liberation, that country in an extraordinary state of amnesia brought before the General Assembly session of 1976 what it called "the situation" arising out of the so-called unilateral withdrawal by India of the waters of the river Ganges at the Farakka barrage located in India. The problem concerned the sharing between India and Bangladesh of the waters of the Ganges during the dry season of some two months when the flow in the river was at its minimum. It was essentially a bilateral question that had to be resolved bilaterally on a fair and equitable basis involving a balance of mutual sacrifice, and I could not see what learned advice, or magic formula, or technical fix the UN could offer. Evidently, Bangladesh was at the receiving end of extravagant advice from questionable American institutions that envisioned much profit for themselves from internationalizing the rivers of the subcontinent. Far from solving a problem that lasted only two months every year, the course was being set at the UN by Bangladesh for politically complicating what was a technical-cum-legal problem, delaying its solution and possibly worsening the relations between the two countries.

I explained to the General Assembly that there had been no "unilateral" withdrawals of water by India, that withdrawals were within the limits set in the agreement with Bangladesh, that international law did not give Bangladesh the right of veto over the utilization by India of the waters of the Ganges within its own territory for its legitimate needs, and that India was not obliged to deny itself the use

of its waters in order to ensure during the lean season the full natural flow of the waters for Bangladesh. We had made several proposals for the use of the dry season waters by both, but the manner in which Bangladesh had rejected them outright made us wonder whether it had some international panacea in mind. The problem posed by Bangladesh was bizarre, considering that because of an abundance of rainfall and three major river systems, it had enough water to cover the entire country in a column of water 30 feet deep. With the help of the Ambassadors of Egypt, Tanzania and Guyana acting as mediators, we reached agreement with Bangladesh to remit the problem back to the bilateral arena for solution. It took an unduly long time to reach this agreement, and it was touch and go more often than I care to remember, especially when self-styled patriots of the two countries tried to intervene and upset the compromsse being composed carefully by me and Admiral Khan of Bangladesh. When it was all over, I was suddenly embraced by one of our strong and silent M.P.s who said, "It was all due to the grace of Sai Baba!" How I wished I had known of it earlier.

Janata Rule

The advent of the Janata Government made no special impact on the UN, for it had come to power through free elections, although the defeat of Indira Gandhi and her party was a surprise. The general expectation was that India's positions on various international issues would not change, for those issues had not been the subject of domestic controversy. With the change of Government, I had been expecting to be replaced but I was pleased to learn that I was regarded as a non-political professional by the new regime. Atal Behari Vajpayee came as Foreign Minister to address the General Assembly session in impeccable Hindi, promised genuine non-alignment and instilled confidence in the continued stability of our foreign relations. Although there was no change in our voting pattern at the UN, there were subtle changes in emphasis, nuances in policy and a new approach to and a new articulation of old problems as a result of fresh thinking. The international community's principal concern, as mentioned to me by several foreigners, was: "Will the new Government suspend or downgrade the family planning programme?" It did, to the eternal discredit of Raj Narain.

The Non-Aligned Movement

The practice of its policy of genuine non-alignment brought the Janata Government closer to the USA and Western Europe, while maintaining its relations with the Soviet Union and its socialist allies on the same old basis and pace. But the impact of this policy on the Non-Aligned Movement was nil, because each non-aligned country had its own perception of non-alignment and pursued its own policy at the UN, which was not necessarily that of the non-aligned movement. However, on certain issues like disarmament, decolonization, apartheid, military aggression and occupation, external intervention in internal affairs, etc., most non-aligned countries voted together and were joined by socialist countries. This identity of positions on some questions with the socialists prompted Cuba, as the most activist among the non-aligned, to propound the thesis for general acceptance that the non-aligned and the socialists were "natural allies".

It fell to me to oppose this creed as soon as it made its appearance in the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned as a formal proposal, for in the absence of any opposition the Angolan Chairman had the loathsome habit of ruling the proposal as adopted! Quoting Krishna Menon I argued that non-aligned countries were against alignments, blocs, etc.; that they were neither aligned to nor against each other; and that they could not possibly consider themselves as natural or unnatural allies of socialists or capitalists, or of anyone else. The fact that socialists voted with the non-aligned was to their credit, and it should not be interpreted to the discredit of non-alignment. I said more in the same vein in defence of genuine non-alignment, and pointed out the *reductio ad absurdum* that in always voting together on the UN budget the USSR became the natural ally of the USA! Egypt, Yugoslavia and a few other intrepid souls offered their contributions in my support, and the Cuban delegate finding that he was out on a limb with no succour in sight withdrew his proposal. I gather that he reintroduced his theme and got it adopted at the Havana summit, but Indira Gandhi had it expunged at the New Delhi summit!

One unfailing remedy for the pathological condition of unquestioning faith in the efficacy of the non-aligned movement is to attend one of its summit conferences, where internal contradictions are carefully concealed in high-sounding documentation that is totally devoid of effective united action. The Arabs use the movement to condemn Israel with tedious regularity instead of acting jointly against it. The Africans get the movement to condemn racism in South Africa, while practising

it in their countries. In Cyprus the movement denies the Greek majority its democratic rights, while demanding the same for the African majority in Southern Rhodesia. Since the Indo-Soviet Treaty, Indians feel an inner urge to reaffirm their non-alignment in and out of season. Yugoslavia has always wanted a place for itself in Europe as a neutral, but its ideology (now withering) drove it to seek the unnatural shelter of the non-aligned movement where it flourished. For Pakistan the non-aligned movement was worth pursuing as a goal, because most Islamic countries were already in it. The superpowers and their allies display nervous interest when non-aligned summits take place, because non-aligned countries control a substantial portion of the world's natural resources and their unused potential for meaningful action is considerable. And so the superpowers exert contrary pressures on the non-aligned movement thereby reducing it to class inaction by the international have-nots. I have been witness to the origin and growth of the movement and am saddened by its repeated failure to serve its common interest through using its potential for effective united action.

Decolonization

India, especially C.S. Jha, played a notable part in the drafting and adoption of the 1960 UN Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. In practice colonial administrations proved immune to the moral force of this Declaration or of majority opinion in the UN; they refused to surrender power to the people, except under sustained pressure exerted internally and from outside. As a result, decolonization came about through struggles of national liberation movements that resorted to the use of force to attain their goals, sometimes with military assistance from socialist and liberated colonial countries. The role of the UN was unhappily that of a powerless but sympathetic spectator, because the veto was used to prevent mandatory measures from being taken to assist the process of decolonization.

A few colonial authorities had the wisdom to know when to hand over power gracefully to the people. Some abandoned their territories when confronted by superior forces. Some passed on their problems to the UN when they became too hot for them to handle. Some allowed racist minorities to usurp power and continue a colonial type of racist rule over the majority. Some fought to the end using mercenaries and other dubious means. Some still cling to small colonies for economic

gain, reasons of prestige, considerations of strategy, or on flimsy legalistic grounds. There is even a new phenomenon in the form of colonial satellites, such as Transkei in South Africa, with spurious independence. Some continue to cherish the illusion that tiny territories far away remain integral parts of the metropolitan countries legally and culturally. I visited one Caribbean colony, Montserrat, which would accept independence only if the UN were to finance its administration! The hardest nut of decolonization, Palestine, remains unresolved and complicated, because it has a bearing on international peace and security. There has been no greater blow to the authority of the UN than the failure of the Security Council to implement the decision of the UN establishing the State of Arab Palestine at the same time as it created Israel.

The USA and the UN

In order to improve the American image at the UN, interested Americans organized orgies of self-criticism in the form of colloquia, seminars, workshops, press commentaries and other such exercises, to which UN Ambassadors were invited including myself. I found that American dedication to the UN, which was largely its own creation, was as strong as ever, and during the administration of President Carter his appointment of Andrew Young, the first American black, was a striking manifestation of his anxiety to woo the third world. Andy Young is a friendly soul with a good deal of humility and charisma, and an excellent articulator of American ideals, values and limitations. He travelled extensively in Africa and the Caribbean, made many friends and improved relations between the USA and African countries. But for his deep interest, sustained dynamism and close relations with Carter, we could not have got the Security Council to adopt resolution 435 on Namibia, which has been implemented, and the arms embargo against South Africa, which has not been effective. Andy had been wooing the Arabs too in the same manner and had established a relationship of mutual trust, which became a source of serious concern to Israel. Exaggerated repercussions followed when he met the PLO representative in his official capacity as President of the Security Council, which he could hardly avoid. There were five American Ambassadors to the UN in my time—from Moynihan, the expert in political warfare, to Andy, the peace-maker—and Andy was the most successful, but many white Americans did not like my saying so.

As far as I could make out from attending these American seminars all over the country, the concern of the USA was directed not to a relaxation of its frozen attitudes on issues where either Israel, or American big business, or the military-industrial complex called the tune, but rather to converting the UN into an institution for "useful dialogue and constructive action". What did the latter mean, I enquired, when in my experience the USA had seldom tabled a draft resolution on constructive action to solve the problems in Palestine or South Africa. So far, the USA had preferred to criticize the draft resolutions of other States without proposing any amendments to them, implying thereby that it would rather have nothing come out of the UN. It became clear during my interaction with thinking American minds that "constructive action" meant "corrective strategy", the aim of which was mainly remedial and punitive, if necessary. A toughening of US diplomacy to defend US interests and to spell out the limits beyond which the USA could not be pushed with impunity was considered necessary. At the same time, the USA would display readiness to negotiate "realistic" settlements on all issues, and woe betide anyone who questioned the parameters of American realism.

It was plain enough that the policy, as conceived by American thinkers, was that the USA should not respond positively to the problems of the poor majority in the UN, unless they responded positively to its vital national and global interests. It was a seemingly fair enough bilateral *quid pro quo*, but then why have the UN with its inconvenient principles and purposes? The moderates, pragmatists and the least developed nations were identified by the USA for special treatment of their priority needs in exchange for their votes at the UN. Interests would form the basis of the US approach to issues before the UN, and the behaviour of a country at the UN on matters affecting US foreign policy aims would determine its bilateral relations with the USA. Any deviational behaviour from this reciprocal pattern would provoke US counter-measures. This policy was intended to persuade third world countries that their real interests lay in cooperation with the USA, i.e., in seeking assistance for capital formation, transfer of technology, agricultural development, stabilization of export earnings, etc. "Irresponsible behaviour" by them at the UN would affect their access to export-import bank credits, pricing arrangements for commodities, resources for development aid, etc. The exceptions would be emergency relief for famine, natural disasters and other humanitarian reasons.

Towards the UN and other such international institutions US policy

would be to withhold contributions to their budgets as a sign of displeasure for "strong and compelling reasons", to reduce donations to voluntary programmes, to delay payment of arrears to specialized Agencies that persisted in "discriminatory actions", to disengage from programmes that were contrary to US aims, to be selective in involvement in UN proceedings, and to concentrate its energies in UN organs where US has some leverage, such as the Security Council, the World Bank, the IMF and the GATT. In other UN organs the USA would downgrade its participation, abstain from voting, and ostentatiously display its indifference as a matter of policy and pressure so as to promote the increased use of the consensus procedure. The USA would not exclude the option of withdrawing from or renouncing its membership of certain Agencies and institutions. It would try to forge a new coalition of its allies and other countries to pursue the new policy in concert, in order to split the third world and minimize the influence of the socialist bloc.

The main American message was that more could be gained by working with the USA than against it, and the chief feature of American strategy should be to avoid trials of strength on principles and promote situations where pragmatic interests would override ideological fixations. The UN's role should be reduced to that of a necessary inconvenience within whose framework US power and influence should be used to serve American interests in the first instance. From the role of a leader, pathfinder and guide for developing the UN into an effective design for coexistence and cooperation of sovereign nation States in peace, the USA has descended to the level of treating the UN as its enemy to be placed under restraint and supervision. This is a tragic misconception, and American thinkers will have to rectify it, when they realize that the USA's enormous military power, political freedom, economic potential, social values and manpower resources place upon it a higher duty and destiny to shape the future of the UN to conform to its Charter. The UN needs to be revivified in the increasingly interdependent world in order to resolve the many looming problems of global dimensions through a pooling of national sovereignty in the common interest of human survival in peace and freedom.

Security Council

By the grace of the Gregorian calendar and the tyranny of the English alphabet, I found myself President of the Security Council in October

1977, at a time when the General Assembly was in full swing and the UN corridors were literally humming with Foreign Ministers. It was a difficult month for any Permanent Representative, in addition to his own work, to preside over the Security Council. Fortunately, I was able, with the consent of other members, to let the Council remain in a state of quiet contemplation during the first fortnight, and to postpone to the second half the items that were trying to intrude upon our collective consciousness.

The first item that claimed my attention was the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Emergency Force stationed in the Sinai. I was advised by the Secretariat of the delicacy involved in the task of seeking the approval of Egypt for the continued presence of the UNEF on its own territory, and of the even greater delicacy of securing also the "approval" of Israel. The former task was happily not difficult. The Egyptian Permanent Representative, when approached by me informally, told me that in his personal opinion he thought there would be no objection in principle on the part of his Government to extending the mandate of the UNEF for another year, but he would consult his Government and let me know their official response.

I then wondered how I should cope with my other delicate task of dealing with Israel. Apparently, according to the interpretation of the parent Resolution and in conformity with past practice, Israel's approval had to be sought and secured. I must confess that I found it difficult to comprehend why Israel's approval should be obtained to the stationing of the UNEF in the territory of another country, and so I did nothing for some time. Eventually, the Permanent Representative of Israel sought me out and wanted to know the situation regarding the UNEF. I had him over to lunch and told him that it was likely that Egypt would agree to the recommendations of the Secretary-General that the mandate of the UNEF be extended for another year. I added that I was simply conveying this piece of information and enquired what the Permanent Representative of Israel intended to do during the meeting of the Security Council, i.e., whether he would participate in it, and if so, in what manner and to what end. His reply was that he would not participate unless Egypt intended to do so. I presumed from his reply that Israel would have no objection to the extension of the UNEF's mandate.

I thought that in these favourable circumstances there was nothing further to be done, except to convene an informal meeting of the Council and announce how I intended to proceed in the matter. All members were in agreement that at the formal meeting neither Israel

nor Egypt need participate in the discussion, and that I should introduce the previous resolution suitably updated. The process of updating was not as easy as I had expected. Israel wanted no changes, not even in punctuation. Egypt preferred changes reflecting the situation as it was, though not changes in substance. In that predicament I thought I should take a hand myself and decide how far I could push Israel and Egypt in the formulation of the draft resolution. The end result was fortunately the happy middle ground and the Council adopted the resolution without any fuss, and I was immensely grateful to the Permanent Representatives of Egypt and Israel for their cooperation.

The next item was more complicated. It was the Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Council had earlier deferred consideration of this Report until October evidently because the Presidency would then be Indian. I was under pressure by the Chairman of the Palestine Committee to convene the Council early in October. No member really objected to a meeting of the Council but everyone wanted to know what its outcome would be. I had before me a draft resolution prepared by the Chairman of the Committee, the Permanent Representative of Senegal, with the help of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was clear to me that that resolution would be vetoed, and such a futile outcome had to be avoided.

I began a series of private meetings with the interested parties including the Palestine Liberation Organization at a high level. The main problem was to convince the parties that in view of the expectations about a Geneva Conference, it would be sterile to embark at that time on a substantive discussion in the Council on the rights of the Palestinian people. The process of consultations that ensued was extensive and included all the principal Arab States including Libya, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. There were three schools of thought: one preferred no meeting of the Council; the second a limited and controlled meeting; and the third a full-scale discussion of the question of Palestine. It became clear to me that a meeting of the Council was inevitable and also that it should do nothing to prejudice the prospects of a Geneva Conference, and equally it should do nothing to place in jeopardy the rights of the Palestinian people. Having reached this conclusion, I began to propagate it among the Arab States and the Palestine Liberation Organization and commended it as being in everyone's interests. I was able to secure the consent of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the other Arab parties.

I then convened an informal meeting of Senegal, Egypt, Syria,

Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestine Liberation Organization and put forward the proposition that the Council would meet; the Chairman of the Committee on Palestine would introduce his Committee's Report; and he would be followed only by members of the Council. There would be no outside participation, though the right of others to participate would be formally recognized. Egypt, Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization said that they would seek to participate but would not in fact do so. I suggested that there would, therefore, be no need to seat the Palestine Liberation Organization at the horse-shoe table, as had been done earlier. This was accepted, provided the right of the Palestine Liberation Organization to participate was recognized by the Council, which it did.

I suggested further that there need be no draft resolution for the present, since several members of the Council were withholding comment in view of the possibility of a resumed Geneva Conference. The Council would adjourn after an inconclusive discussion and meet again at a later date to be decided through further consultations. This was agreed to by the Arab parties and later by the Council of Members at informal consultations, although Libya reserved its position for tactical reasons. Israel was then informed of this scenario and it also reserved its right to participate. All that remained thereafter was to keep my fingers crossed until the Council's formal meeting. There was a prolonged wait during which there were some indirect pressures to upset the pre-arranged scenario. I made it clear, however, that I expected all parties to honour their word given to me in the presence of witnesses, and I must say that I was relieved and pleased that everything went according to plan.

The last item that I had to handle was the question of South Africa. This proved to be an extremely complex exercise. The Council had before it four far-reaching draft resolutions that had been introduced by its African members in March 1977 and held over since then. Naturally, they had priority and there was pressure from the African Group to have them voted on first, even though some of them would be vetoed. The African drafts envisaged inter alia the imposition of an arms embargo specifically stipulated as being under Chapter VII of the Charter, and as justified by the situation in South Africa having become a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. There were also other elements to which the Western members had taken exception, e.g., revision of licensing arrangements, restrictions on investments, trade, etc. with South Africa.

In my capacity as President I attempted to put down in a draft

resolution all those elements which I felt the West could be pressurized to accept, or at any rate not to veto. I then circulated my text informally among the members and was encouraged to find that it was looked at with distaste by the West and frowned on by the Africans. Thereupon, I encouraged the African and Western members to meet together and try to agree on a compromise text.

The meetings between the Africans and the West got off to a good start. The West presented its own draft resolution largely inspired by the USA. It was strongly critical of the system of apartheid and condemnatory of the severe acts of repression by the South African Government. It also called upon all States to review their economic relations with South Africa and to establish codes of conduct for their companies doing business in South Africa that would abolish racial discrimination. Where it fell short of African expectations was that while it sought to convert the existing voluntary arms embargo into a mandatory embargo, it avoided specific reference to Chapter VII, although it used the language of that Chapter. Furthermore, the Western conception of the threat to international peace was that it stemmed from the fact of the acquisition by South Africa of arms, and not from the system of apartheid. Yet another shortcoming was that the mandatory arms embargo would be limited to six months in the first instance.

The African-Western informal discussions soon degenerated into each side defending its own draft resolution and finding fault with that of the other side, and in consequence became deadlocked for several days. However, it became clear that the West would agree to a mandatory arms embargo, but was reluctant to veto the African draft resolutions. This over-anxiety not to use the veto caused the Africans to presume wrongly that the Western members might abstain from voting on their draft resolutions. I decided to clear the air by forcing the pace and convened the Council, which met after several false starts during which further attempts were vainly made to arrive at a compromise. I quickly put the African resolutions, one by one, to the vote on the last day of my Presidency, 31 October 1977. Three of them were vetoed; three negative votes were cast by France, the UK and the USA on all three draft resolutions.

Since the Council was unable to take a decision, I immediately suspended the meeting for informal consultations. I was concerned, and so were others, that South Africa should not be allowed to exploit the three vetoes. I, therefore, re-introduced my own draft resolution after suitably revising it as a basis for building a consensus and seriously

commended it to all the members. It was already late in the evening and my Presidency was due to be over at midnight. The Africans were understandably angry over the Western vetoes and were in no mood to consider any new initiative such as mine. The non-aligned and other members encouraged me on, while the socialist members were quite uncertain as to what ought to be done except that they should lend support to the African cause. The Western members naturally desired to neutralize the damage that might have been caused by their unavoidable vetoes.

I urged the Western and African Groups to react as promptly as possible to my draft resolution and to come forward with their amendments, additions, etc. The Africans replied that they needed more time, as they intended to suggest some additions. The West was in a hurry and enquired if I intended formally to table my draft resolution, and I replied in the negative since my draft was no more than a basis for consensus. I was then asked if I had any objection to the West tabling my text as its own formal draft resolution with an additional paragraph. I had none and said so, and the West then circulated the text formally. Its appearance at that late hour was no doubt in the nature of a coup for the West, and it took the Africans by surprise. Explanations followed to mollify the Africans. In any case, members needed time to seek instructions from their Governments. We were within sight of consensus and it would have been a pity to have forced a vote, as it might have meant some abstentions, or non-participation at least.

And so I adjourned the meeting in order to allow the question to spill over into November, when the Presidency went appropriately to an African member, Libya. More informal consultations ensued during which the African members proposed some additional paragraphs acceptable to the West. Within a few days a revised consensus text made its appearance, and because of its historic importance in that it was the first ever Chapter VII action against a member State of the United Nations, I asked for a formal vote. The voting was a unanimous show of hands in its favour.

During the consideration of the South African problem it was necessary for me to be in touch with the representative of the African National Congress, and so was I with the Palestinian Liberation Organization during the consideration of the Palestine question. The role of national liberation movements has come to be increasingly important. As members of the Council respond variously to the aspirations and urgings of liberation movements, the movements themselves are obliged to recognize the realities and accept the limitations of Security

Council actions. While there are no established centres of power in the Council, regional groups wield significant influence on members, as was the case with the Arab and African Groups in October.

The role of the President of the Council should not be exaggerated. He can play a useful role if, in addition to having the right temperament, he has a good grasp of the essentials of the subjects under discussion and is prepared to take initiatives himself leading to the formulation of consensus. He should seek the highest-common denominator of the opinions among the Council's members. He should, of course, recognize the practical and other limitations of consensus making in certain situations, and generally promote private negotiations, while avoiding public acrimonious debate. Sometimes it may be desirable to have some draft resolutions rejected in order to encourage the formulation of consensus.

I should like to end with the thought—what after consensus? It is difficult enough to reach consensus. It is often far more difficult to implement it, as will be evident from the experience of the Council in its failure to implement its unanimous decisions concerning sanctions against Southern Rhodesia, Cyprus and the Middle East.

Special Session on Disarmament

Disarmament was a burning issue at the UN in the days of Nehru, when it was usually left to the Indian delegation to take some initiative every year in the General Assembly. It was not so during my second incarnation as the Indian Permanent Representative to the UN; those were the years of the first detente between the superpowers, when they had taken over the arms race to regulate and disarmament to disregard. The rest of us waited expectantly for results, which came fitfully in the form of treaties that were hopefully called partial disarmament measures but which actually bore no relationship to disarmament! Meanwhile, the arms race galloped along and produced new horrors, subject to what were called arms limitation agreements between the superpowers, which were very limited indeed. There was mounting cynicism among non-aligned and neutral nations who fearfully watched, in the words of Alva Myrdal, the Swedish Minister of Disarmament, "the game of disarmament—i.e., how the USA and the Soviet Union ran the arms race". That was and still is the major intellectual and moral dilemma of our time, the paradox of the superpowers in their quest for peace running away from the goal of disarmament in an

insane arms race as if possessed by some terminal psychosis. The General Assembly continued to discuss disarmament every year to the point of intellectual exhaustion, reaffirming old resolutions and adopting new ones on a variety of related aspects and themes. The mood of non-aligned and neutral nations at that point of time was reflected in the following lines I had penned then:

> A high-minded Swede named Jan Martenson
> brings disarmament to our annual attention;
> Is it some kind of game,
> or just another name
> for doing nothing with much ado and pretension.

This passive mood did not last long. The non-aligned and neutral States under the leadership of the Mexican delegate, Alfonso Garcia Robles, pressed for a special session of the General Assembly to be devoted only to disarmament, and they were able to convene the first ever such session in May 1978. It was a memorable occasion in which non-governmental organizations from several countries participated and there was considerable public interest in it. Morarji Desai, our Prime Minister then, addressed the Assembly and so did leaders from many other countries including President Carter of the USA. The UN had solemnly initiated in 1969 the Disarmament Decade and that was coming to an end with none of its objectives having been achieved, and with the nuclear arms race out of control. What had begun as a search for security through nuclear arms for self-defence had resulted in the accumulation of such surplus stockpiles of nuclear weapons as to constitute a threat to mankind! Our concern in these outrageous circumstances was to evolve through discussion an international disarmament strategy in which the UN should play a guiding role, particularly in the prevention of nuclear war, and to that end promote negotiations towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. I was given a strong supporting delegation, including experienced and knowledgeable diplomats in Aravind Vellodi and Chinmay Gharekhan, as well as experts in the field in the redoubtable K. Subrahmanyam and the erudite Kashi Jain.

The role of the US delegation was crucial to the success of the session. The previous positions of that delegation at multilateral discussions on disarmament had been frankly negative, and we had wondered whether the "political will" for progress was present in the US administration. We knew that opinion in the Congress was divided

and was changing under relentless pressures from an awakened public opinion responsive to the perils of nuclear war. There was hope that the Democratic administration under President Carter would be more sensitive and sympathetic, but the hardened experts in the US delegation were peddling the same old line about the limitations of any multilateral forum, including the General Assembly, in dealing with bilateral questions concerning superpower disarmament. However, the USSR did not share this view. The outcome of the discussions in the session was to be embodied in a document consisting of three sections: a General Declaration, a Programme of Action, and the Negotiating Machinery.

The majority view that emerged during the session, reflecting also the opinion of the peace activists in the USA and other countries, was that the immediate goal was elimination of the danger of nuclear war. The US experts did not share this assessment and expressed the view that there were three agreements between the USA and the USSR (viz., Hot Line Agreement of 1963, Accidents Prevention Agreement of 1971, and Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement of 1973) that were adequate for elimination of the danger of nuclear war. Our view was that they were entirely inadequate for the purpose, for they stipulated only as an objective, and not as a legal obligation, the removal of the danger of nuclear war, and they also reserved the right of self-defence in a context which would include the use of nuclear weapons. The USSR having offered as early as 1955 a proposal for non-first use of nuclear weapons, had no difficulty with the language of the non-aligned draft on prevention of nuclear war.

President Carter

There was only one problem State, the USA, whose experts opposed every reference in the draft document to prevention of nuclear war on the specious ground that it was alarmist in effect when there was no cause for alarm. And in this respect the US experts were completely out of tune with their own public and with the USSR, the other party to the Agreements. Andy Young, the US Ambassador, arranged a meeting for me with President Carter when he came to address the special session. I showed the President our draft paragraphs on prevention of nuclear war and enquired why the USA was opposed to them, when they were uncritical of the USA, were not against US interests and aims, and were intended only to serve the cause of mankind as a whole. Carter read them carefully twice, asked Andy who was opposing the text and was informed of the sources of opposition and the reasons. Carter then gave Andy the green signal to support the draft and presented me with his all-encompassing smile saying he would try to convert his experts! Thereafter, we encountered no further problems with the US delegation over the drafts on preventing nuclear war, the programme of action and the negotiating machinery, and the Final Document was adopted unanimously. The negotiating forum at Geneva became the Conference on Disarmament with 40 member States, with its Presidentship rotating among the members on a monthly basis, and with a new Secretary-General for the Conference.

India's term on the Security Council came to its end on 31 December 1978 and thereafter, I was given six extra months to wind up my affairs before returning home to retirement. It was during this period that one afternoon in February 1979 at the UN I was told by Bill Barton, the Ambassador of Canada, that that very morning the West European Group had rejected all the seven nominations for the office of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva and were looking for a more senior and experienced diplomat for that post. Barton had suggested my name, without my prior consent, and the reaction had been uniformly favourable. He wanted to know whether I was interested and, if I was, I should get my name put forward officially. My wife who had been looking forward to retirement said it could wait for a few more years. Foreign Minister Vajpayee was good enough to nominate me and then following consultations with the 40 members, the UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim appointed me to the post with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General. And so we went to Geneva in June 1979 to work in the historic Palais des Nations, where the first disastrous Disarmament Conference was held in 1932.

Postscript

In my time at the U.N. the Ambassador of China was Huang Hua, who later became Foreign Minister and in that capacity attended and addressed the General Assembly sessions. During the session of 1977, I arranged a meeting with him for India's Foreign Minister A.B. Vajpayee. As it was their first meeting, there was no more than a general exchange of views on the world situation. On Vajpayee's instructions I met Huang Hua later to sound him about the settlement of our boundary dispute. He proved to be a good listener and so I had

my say in full. His reactions were sympathetic and I found him forward-looking and positive within the limitations of the Chinese system. He responded favourably to the idea that the exploratory talks I had initiated should be carried forward confidentially in order to understand each other's vital interests and to assess the parameters of acceptable mutual accommodation so as to guide the official level negotiations in the direction of a definitive settlement. It occurred to me that the Chinese knew what they wanted within reason and what compromises they could make, but I had the uncomfortable feeling that we had not yet given careful thought to our own "bottom line". I had expressed the pious hope that we would do so soon. Regrettably, this is the sort of dilemma that defies all, as each political party tries to outdo the others in public manifestation of obsessive attachment to every sacred inch of the areas claimed by us.

12.

OVER TO GENEVA

My new post of Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva was by no means the sinecure that it was to my predecessor, a Finn, who had served in it under entirely different political conditions. Since this multilateral forum was first established in 1962, it had been under the stewardship of the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR, who functioned as its co-chairman, a manifestation of the many-splendoured aspects of detente. It was their prerogative to convene the Conference at will, which they did only when it had any work to do, and that was when the superpowers decided what work to give it. There was no agenda or programme of work, or time-table, or rules of procedure. Usually, the USA and the USSR negotiated treaties privately and presented to the Conference agreed texts, which would then be adopted, after some discussion, by consensus, and they acted as the spokesmen of the Conference as far as the press was concerned. In that sort of superpower hegemonic situation the Conference could do no more than rubber-stamp the treaties presented by them, and inevitably such treaties did not directly address the most serious problems of general public concern, such as prevention of nuclear war, cessation of the nuclear arms race, arms reductions and nuclear disarmament.

As a result, there had been increasing frustration among non-aligned and neutral nations over the failure of the Conference to negotiate more substantial treaties with a direct bearing on disarmament. The first special session of the General Assembly of the UN devoted to disarmament in 1978 liquidated the co-chairmanship of the USA and the USSR, and democratized the Conference by expanding its membership and allowing each member to preside over it by rotation every month. Its new Secretary-General was expected to be the factor of continuity and to function in fact as the shadow Chairman, and provide the Conference with rules of procedure, agenda, programme of work, records, interpretation, etc. In addition, he was

the Personal Representative of the UN Secretary-General, because the Conference was considered to be outside the UN. In other words, it was not regarded as a subordinate organ of the UN General Assembly; if it were, it would have had to function under the UN rules of procedure of taking decisions by majority votes. However, the two superpowers absolutely insisted on the consensus procedure as a precondition for their participation. It took me the best part of the first year to negotiate and secure the agreement of all members to the agenda and the rules of procedure, subject to several understandings. Consensus, as in the past, was first interpreted as unanimous approval, and after a couple of years' experience of repeated deadlocks, I was able to get the members to agree to interpret consensus as absence of opposition. It was not unusual for the Conference during the first two years to be bogged down in interminable procedural discussions on competence, credentials, interpretation of rules, etc.

When the Conference finally got going after surmounting a variety of ingenious procedural hurdles, it had quite an impressive agenda to tackle, viz., nuclear test ban, nuclear disarmament, chemical weapons, radiological and other weapons of mass destruction and security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States. During the Carter administration bilateral negotiations between the USA and the USSR on a nuclear weapons test ban treaty and on a treaty banning production of chemical weapons had almost reached the point of conclusion, but with the election of Reagan the negotiations were suspended. The Geneva Conference took some time to reopen *ab initio* negotiations on a chemical weapons treaty with a limited mandate that was broadened from year to year. As to nuclear issues, the USA took a firm line against the Conference's competence to undertake negotiations of any kind, and that reduced the Conference to no more than a structured seminar on nuclear disarmament, while the actual negotiations proceeded bilaterally between the superpowers. As the UN Secretary-General's Personal Representative, I had access to the US and Soviet negotiators on bilateral matters at Geneva and they kept me posted with progress or lack of it.

Once at a Reception I joined Nitze and Kvitsinsky in a corner and they confessed that they had run into a roadblock of uncertain origin, presumably erected behind their backs by those who sent them instructions from Washington and Moscow. My unsought advice to them was firstly to try wearing each other's hat, and secondly to make a personal effort to overcome the roadblock. Nitze was quite keen to wear the other fellow's hat, whereas Kvitsinsky was more interested in going

round the roadblock. A month later, they were both in the news as having gone for a quiet walk in the Geneva woods and come up with their own celebrated formula for intermediate range missiles as an alternative to the zero option. This inspired leak to the press generated more interest in Europe than in the USA and the USSR, which felt obliged to shoot down this unauthorized private initiative, as it went beyond the obscure instructions sent by paranoiac military minds and their political masters.

I had my own roadblock to negotiate and it concerned the status of the Conference of which I was Secretary-General. The majority of its members including the non-aligned, the neutrals and the socialists regarded the Conference as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly of the UN to be serviced automatically by the UN Secretariat at the expense of the regular budget. In other words, they felt no need for a resolution of the General Assembly requesting the UN Secretary-General to service the Conference. The West European States and the USA held that the Conference was not subordinate to the UN, and therefore they saw no reason why the UN Secretary-General should provide it with assistance! I was informed by the Legal Office that without a formal resolution of the General Assembly I would be operating illegally, and therefore it could authorize neither funds nor staff for the Conference! It was quite plain to me that I had to get the General Assembly somehow to adopt a formal resolution requesting the UN Secretary-General to provide the necessary assistance to the Conference.

And so I drafted a resolution but could find no member State willing to sponsor it. Every State that was approached declined to do so for reasons of principle. The Chairman of the Conference at that time was U Saw Hlaing of Burma and he had standing instructions from his Government not to sponsor any resolution! Eventually I got him to sponsor it, not as Representative of Burma, but as Chairman of the Conference, and when I thought I had got round that roadblock, I was told that if the resolution were voted on, members who subscribed to both schools of thought concerning the status of the Conference would abstain. I was faced, after all the excruciating pains I had taken, with the prospect of the resolution not attracting either positive or negative votes, and legal pundits might well question the propriety of adopting a resolution by unanimous abstention!. It was indeed the theatre of the absurd, and I was both the author and director of the play and my cast was deaf and dumb. Finally, I persuaded the Chairman of the First Committee of the General Assembly, Davidson Hepburn of the

Bahamas, to take up the resolution and make the statement: "If no one asks for a vote on this resolution, I take it as adopted without a vote." Hepburn said his piece; no one cared enough to call for a vote, and the resolution was adopted! I had my way at long last, and it was my big moment as a backstage puppeteer! I am afraid the members did not cover themselves with glory over the status issue.

The Geneva Conference began its work on chemical weapons by setting up a working group, which took over ten years to draft a Treaty that may take some more time for finalization. It is unlikely to have any other achievement to its credit for years to come. The USA and the USSR tabled a draft treaty banning radiological weapons and the Conference established a working group to negotiate its terms. In the course of its examination members made the surprising discovery that they were dealing with a non-existent weapon, and indeed one whose fabrication was fraught with enormous practical problems and whose military use was of doubtful value. The members promptly lost interest in this and other such phantom weapons, the banning of which would have been a massive exercise in futility. An offshoot of these discussions was the rather more pertinent question of banning attacks on nuclear power generating reactors, as that would result in release of radioactivity into the environment; and this aspect of nuclear danger continues to engage the Conference in consultations. The Conference also established a working group to formulate a comprehensive programme of disarmament, as it were, *in vacuo* and it has become a fascinating academic exercise that is likely to keep the delegates busy disagreeing with one another for a generation or more over objectives, priorities, principles, stages, measures, time-frames, machinery, etc.

A question of more direct relevance to the security of non-nuclear member States was assurances against nuclear attacks from the five nuclear weapon States. Each of the five States gave its own assurance and the Conference set up a working group to negotiate an international Convention embodying a common formula for assuring the non-nuclear countries. However, no common formula could be forged out of the different conditional commitments given by the five nuclear weapon States, but even so the work goes on in the hope that the conditions would be withdrawn! For example, only China has pledged non-first use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. The Soviet Union has given a similar non-first use pledge, but it does not cover non-nuclear countries that have nuclear weapons of other States on their territory. The assurances given by the USA and the UK would not apply to countries that have not signed the Non-Proliferation

Treaty, or to countries that are members of military alliances headed by the USSR. France's assurance would only apply to countries that are part of an established nuclear weapon free zone. It is quite impossible to distil from these five different pledges a common basis for a legal instrument for assuring all non-nuclear States, but the working group continues trying to square the circle! Two new items were added to the agenda of the Conference after prolonged negotiations with the USA, viz., prevention of nuclear war, and prevention of an arms race in outer space, but the USA has effectively vetoed any negotiations under these items and permitted only expression of views.

The daily histrionics at the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva inspired me to prescribe the following for one act plays on disarmament:

The stage is set
the curtain rises
the cast is ready
it knows the script
but the play unfolds
at the actors' will
each reacting to the other;
the author swoons
the audience leaves
the actors applaud
the curtain falls.

The period 1979 to 1984 were years of non-achievement in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, chiefly because relations between the USA and the USSR were at a very low point and for a time all bilateral talks between them were suspended. The mood outside was reflected inside my Conference and often I had to intervene diplomatically as the Personal Representative of the UN Secretary-General to prevent deadlocks and keep the Conference alive and going. This was by no means easy, because the political spectrum of the Chairmen strikingly varied from Canada in one month to China in the next, to Cuba then to Czechoslovakia and on to Egypt and Ethiopia! And the taking of decisions by consensus in such a forum on even minor matters like when to adjourn or when to resume work assumed political importance. I was certainly kept busy pouring gallons of oil on turbulent waters, reining in the Chairmen, and taking personal initiatives to explore areas of consensus. At the end of a bad day the Press Bar

came in useful for delegates' hurt egos to recover their poise, and for the neutral Secretariat to let its hair down. India was well served in the Conference by the urbane Gharekhan, the irrepressible Venkateswaran and the formidable Dubey.

There was an important breakthrough in the Conference after three years of wrangling in getting the USA to agree in principle to set up a working group on what till then was forbidden ground, the nuclear test ban. But it was subject to the US condition that the working group would limit itself to discussing questions of verification and compliance, and not try to negotiate the terms of a treaty. It called for the drafting of a mandate, and a subgroup was set up to do the job. It drafted some 15 formulations, none of which secured the agreement of the non-aligned, the socialist and the Western countries. In desperation the Conference turned to me to produce a consensus rabbit out of my hat. After consulting the three groups I produced two rabbits, one called draft mandate J-1 and the other J-2, and told the Conference to choose one of the two and that I was not prepared to amend either of them. In substance they were the same, but the words were different, and privately I requested the non-aligned leader (Mexico) to support both alternatives. He did so and a day later the USA expressed preference for J-2, and at my suggestion Mexico immediately proposed that J-2 be adopted and urged the USSR to join the consensus. The USSR could not be shown up as preventing a consensus and so the following day it lent its support to J-2, which then became the mandate for the first ever working group on a nuclear question. Its importance was no more than symbolic. Naturally, I was generously thanked for my assistance by one and all, and when I was asked by the US delegate if "J" stood for my name, I replied, "No. J- 1 was Joke No.1 and J-2 was Joke No.2." There was no real difference between them and the whole squabble over the mandate was a joke; I tried to show it up as such, and that was my other big moment. When I left the Geneva Conference at the end of 1984 to come home to retire, the test ban working group was still alive but only just! At my last meeting of the Conference, I penned the following lines about disarmament negotiations:

It's the same old bargaining in the market place
losing nothing, gaining something, saving face;
to count Pershings
instead of blessings
is taking too many risks with the human race.

Ask not for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for the arms race that rolls
forever forward
never backward;
it tolls also for all living souls.

My views on the nuclear scene are set out in my books *Nuclear Arms and the Human Race*, and *Balance of Power in the Nuclear Age*.

Danger of War

During my five years in Geneva there was a deepening of distrust between the USA and the USSR. Fear, that ancient legacy of mankind, was the driving force behind their arms race. Allegations and counter-allegations of violations of agreements were flung by them at each other at every meeting and in the press. Bilateral negotiations had been broken off, and at the multilateral level discussions made no progress. The arms race was entering outer space, while on earth nuclear-armed missiles were deployed in forward areas in Europe only three to six minutes away from their targets. Each side was after a correlation of forces favourable for attaining its military objectives. Neither would give up any advantage it had for the sake of preserving world peace. The USA believed that its military superiority was the key to effective deterrence of the USSR. However, American superiority appeared as first strike capability to the USSR, which therefore felt justified in its race for military parity.

That the superpowers should pursue military doctrines which placed at risk the very survival of mankind was intolerable to non-aligned and neutral countries as well as to enlightened public opinion in the USA and the USSR and their allies. Never before was humanity confronted with the dark possibility of its extinction by the very military doctrine designed to ensure its preservation. Prevention of nuclear war became a categorical imperative for humanity's future evolution, and to that end world public opinion was mobilized by peace movements everywhere. We were passing through a historic phase without precedent, one that plainly enjoined mankind to give up forever the old habits of mind that had led to wars, and to take up instead the challenges of peaceful coexistence through mutual accommodation of interests and beliefs. In the nuclear age war could no longer be the last resort in the settling of disputes; it would be the ultimate negation of all human endeavour. I received thousands of communications in

hundreds of balloons from school children, housewives and working people in Europe containing the same simple message: "Humanity's survival is not for negotiation." There was something symbolic in these messages coming down in balloons, as it were, from the heavens and I made sure they were sent on to the two superpowers.

Space-Based Defence

American public opinion was massively opposed to nuclear war and its impact on the US Congress and US President was decisive. Despite his posture of apparent belligerence, Reagan had no enthusiasm for nuclear war, especially if he would have to initiate it. The USSR had pledged to the United Nations that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons. The USA had to come up with a new strategy to appease its own public opinion, and space-based defence was its answer. A senior American negotiator close to the White House told me that Reagan was persuaded to finance the research for space defence by the clinching argument that the alternative was to press the buttons in the black box and unleash a nuclear holocaust! Reagan's allergy to the black box became pronounced when the consequences of his presing each button were explained in fearful detail in terms of Soviet retaliatory attacks on Washington, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc. The deployment of weapons in space to shoot down Soviet missiles before they could reach their targets seemed to Reagan almost divine in inspiration and execution. The sword of Damocles was to be converted into the shield of Reagan to save the USA and the world!

This brain-child did not emerge out of the mainstream of American strategic thinking, or from consultations with Pentagon, State Department and NATO, but from Reagan's kitchen cabinet composed of General Graham, Admiral Watkins, Edward Teller and Robert McFarlane. The immediate objective of the new vision of star wars was to secure from Congress a ten per cent increase in the defence budget. The long-term goal was US technological superiority and bankruptcy of the Soviet Union's economy. The short-term aim was to use it as a bargaining chip in bilateral arms control talks. These *ex post facto* rationales confounded the USA's allies, forced the USSR to devise counter-measures and expose "holes" in the US space shield, and outraged the US public with the crippling costs of an arms race in outer space.

It is difficult to envisage the course of history, if Mikhail Gorbachev had not appeared in 1985 on the scene with plans for unilateral cuts in Soviet military expenditure and for reform of his country's economy. It was certainly a most fortunate coincidence. Paradoxically, Americans think that Reagan's plans for space arms caused the Gorbachev phenomenon! The fact that the UN proclaimed 1986 as the International Year of Peace was welcome recognition of the timely advent of Gorbachev.

My Role

As Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, my role was sometimes that of a midwife or a catalyst in the negotiating process, but most of the time I was just an attentive listener in a Chamber of dissonance, rather like a psycho-analyst. The world was burdened with so many unsolved problems and international relations were poisoned by so much distrust, suspicion and fear that threats to security inevitably arose, and the road to peace was through either disarmament, or military superiority for deterring aggression. Not a single State was prepared to disarm unilaterally, so that the issues boiled down to ways and means of limiting, controlling and reducing one's arms and forces, if one simply had to have them. This process involved two sets of parallel negotiations, one designed to create mutual confidence among European States, and the other to establish military parity between opponents at progressively lower levels. The former was beginning to yield results, but the latter concerning NATO and WTO, in particular the USA and USSR, was deadlocked until Gorbachev's appearance on the scene. The impetus for progress in the multilateral forum of the Conference on Disarmament had necessarily to come from success in bilateral talks on nuclear matters, of which there were no signs. It, therefore, taxed the ingenuity, patience and faith of all member States to keep the multilateral talks going until there was improvement in the international climate.

As the spokesman of the multilateral forum, I had quite a time explaining to the international press, the peace movements and non-governmental organizations the virtuous necessity and the vital importance of the Conference on Disarmament being kept alive and ready for that happy day to dawn when there will be peace and security with disarmament. It was no less than an act of faith and this new experience brought me deeper understanding of the dilemmas confronting the

superpowers, the different behaviour patterns of States seeking to safeguard their security, and the reactions of the general public to the potential threat to human survival. There was not much else that I could do, and yet I was expected to help in some unfathomable way in situations of confrontation between negotiating States. I had to operate in the shadows of the sensitive superpowers, who were extremely suspicious of me, my intentions and initiatives in the beginning. It was, therefore, a very pleasant surprise when on the eve of my retirement the Ambassadors of the USA and USSR, Lou Fields and Viktor Issraelyan, called on me together to convey their appreciation for my "objectivity and fairness". I was glad there was at least one thing they could agree upon at that time.

As Personal Representative of the UN Secretary-General, it was my business to keep him informed of the disarmament negotiating scene at Geneva, and so I was allowed to peep behind the screen of US-Soviet talks. These peeps gave me an insight into the serious problems each superpower faced vis-à-vis the other superpower, and also each within its own camp's conflicting and many-sided interests. The mental attitudes of both were fearfully negative, based as they were on the jaundiced perceptions of each other's intentions and weapons' capabilities. At the same time, I sensed a gradual growth of mutual understanding and of awareness that each side had an entirely needless overkill capacity in weapons. What was also encouraging was the acknowledgement by both of their awesome responsibility for avoidance of war and for the survival of mankind. It was fascinating to see how the two superpowers went together either to the brink of mutual agreement, or the brink of mutual conflict, only to pause and hesitate. I used to tell them that the side that had greater self assurance and confidence in its security would first make unilateral gestures towards disarmament before the other side would follow suit. It was my mistaken belief then that the USA would be the first to make this historic gesture. Little did I expect it from the USSR, where Gorbachev had not then made his appearance as its leader.

Kurt Waldheim, as Secretary-General, instinctively felt certain even during moments of crisis that there would be no nuclear war. His successor Perez de Cuellar, however, shared the apprehensions of non-aligned States concerning the risks and danger of nuclear war inherent in the arms race, and supported the role of world public opinion in shaping the peace policies of the superpowers. The Secretary-General's position of trust and impartiality has not been used to promote talks concerning disarmament. There is scope for it,

but in the inter-play of power between States they wish to keep out the Secretary-General, except to avert war, as over Cuba.

13.

REFLECTIONS IN RETIREMENT

"As the light of remembrance fails, the night of forgetfulness dawns"

Nehru's Policy

To have been present at the creation of independent India and to have been a member of its diplomatic service since its inception has been a unique and rewarding experience, particularly because most of it was under the uplifting leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. It was an impressionable period of expanding horizons, lofty conceptions, ennobling visions, indomitable will and prodigious effort to shape the Indian reality to keep its tryst with the destiny conceived by Nehru. Sometimes we found ourselves fighting for causes larger than national in dimension. India's own interests and security acquired, strategically, an international amplitude, and the means employed to safeguard them were free of the entanglements of foreign military alliances. Nehru's foreign policy and the pursuit of his diplomacy was necessarily without the traditional support of power, and was conducted in the unfavourable climate of the cold war. It was a new experience for Nehruvian diplomacy, which acquired an international standing and prestige that outlived Nehru for several years. What I think I learned from that experience is the importance of detachment and objectivity as credentials for diplomacy. Looking back I have the impression that given the history and nature of India's problems, Nehru's conception of foreign policy and its conduct were on the right lines, with the exception of the war with China that could have been avoided. However, the situation within India, as it deteriorated, began to erode its international prestige after Nehru.

A question that keeps cropping up is whether in retrospect it might have been in India's interest to have joined an eastern alliance headed by the USA in the 1950s. Such an outcome might have been considered, if the USA had supported India on the Kashmir dispute, or at least remained neutral. But the USA, having chosen to be guided by the UK in supporting Pakistan, and having used Pakistan as a base for its aerial

military espionage of the USSR, would have wanted to use India as a base for military operations against China. That sort of involvement would have worsened our relations with China and possibly precipitated a Sino-Indian war in Tibet and elsewhere on our border with unpredictable consequences, including perhaps greater loss of territory than at present. And the American role would have been to wage war to the last Indian at India's cost, and it was just as well that India declined to join a military alliance with the USA. By then India's relations with the USSR, China and non-aligned countries had developed extensively. The course of India's history might have been very different if we had joined an American military pact, and it may have resulted in the loss of the Kashmir valley. As things are now, all that remains in the way of improving relations with the USA is American military aid to Pakistan, and the ball is in the American court.

National Interest

National interest is an important, and not the only, component of foreign policy in the international environment of today. On attaining independence India found itself already a member State of the United Nations having accepted the obligations of the UN Charter. Promotion of national interests, therefore, was required to be within the framework of international peace. I am making a special point of this, because of the mistaken belief in some countries that their national interests are sacrosanct and paramount. It is this erroneous notion that has come in the way of several States peacefully settling their disputes, and has resulted in conflicts between them. Self-righteous attitudes lead to confrontational postures when national interests clash, and conflicts inevitably follow and assume the character of "just wars". In the circumstances, peaceful settlement of disputes on a bilateral basis is well-nigh impossible. The disputants' frozen nationalist positions render them unable to negotiate compromises, lest they should be accused of surrendering national interests.

India has had her share of such disputes and conflicts with Pakistan and China. Neither bilateral talks nor the traditional last resort to war has resolved the disputes. But cease fires along lines of control have been observed for several years, with no serious attempts by either side to resume general hostilities, despite local violations of the cease fire. From the security point of view these lines of control may need adjustment, but only in the context of negotiations on that basis for a definitive

settlement. This may seem self-evident for durable peace, but none of the three countries has so far been prepared to propose negotiations on the basis of existing lines of control, because of the assumed danger of being seen as giving up national interests. They have become prisoners of their own past, and victims of quixotic notions of national interests, unrelated to the real interests of their peoples.

Sino-Indian Dispute

Sovereignty, national security and territorial integrity are all terms powerful in their evocation of national interests, and by inflating their meaning they become breeders of wars. They need redefinition in the enlightened peace-making climate of the UN Charter accepted by all States. In the case of India and China the history of their dispute is of relatively recent origin, and they should settle it subject to the paramount imperative of peace and with due regard to law and their overall national interests. The Indo-Pakistan problem, however, has endless ramifications in the politically volcanic subcontinent, where peace is a collective necessity. The Sino-Indian boundary dispute is easier to resolve and should be accorded priority for a negotiated settlement on a realistic and mutually beneficial basis with specific reference to lines of control before the conflict of 1962. To that end, the Government of India should evolve a national consensus and eschew childish twaddle about safeguarding every sacred inch of altitudes hitherto reserved for divinities.

The Nuclear Option

There was a moment of alarm in 1964 when China exploded an atomic bomb, and Prime Minister Shastri saw in it a potential danger to India. Shastri could then have chosen the nuclear arms option. Instead he sent his men scurrying to Moscow and Washington shopping vainly for nuclear umbrellas. The perverse outcome of his quest was the Non-Proliferation Treaty! Our own nuclear firecracker was delayed by Homi Bhabha's death until 1974 when Indira Gandhi authorized it. It was a brief boost to prestige, and the great expectations generated by it did not materialize, as we succumbed to external pressures. It would have been wiser not to have exploded a nuclear device at all than to have done so and then stopped further experimentation under pressure. In the formulation of policy it is essential to be fully aware of our

weaknesses, and not be carried away by wishful thinking, which blind only us and no one else.

Now that Pakistan is only a screw-driver away from a nuclear bomb, the Indian intelligentsia has been agog with excitement and anticipation of its crossing the nuclear threshold. It has been like waiting for Godot, the expected Pakistani nuclear test not yet making its debut. Meanwhile,

> the question every year
> is should we go nuclear,
> if they do, should we?
> if they dont, we'll see;
> can anything be more unclear?

This is the strategy of ambiguity that is designed to deter Pakistan from taking the fateful plunge across the nuclear threshold. If and when it does, India will have another bout of nerves and probably decide to opt for the nuclear weapon, whose pregnant meaning lies in the ambiguity of its use.

I have participated in many a seminar on the Indian nuclear option, and I am impressed by the fact that no one has favoured our unilateral renunciation of the nuclear weapon, which is not really a security option, although a commendable moral position that may save our souls, if not our skins. In the nuclear age the mode of survival, according to Henry Kissinger, is through nuclear threat and counter-threat. The threat of use is supposed to act as an effective deterrent to aggression, and if Pakistan were to choose this mode for survival, so would India. If India should go in for nuclear arms, it ought to clarify that their use would only be in self-defence against nuclear attacks, and that India would not be the first to initiate such attacks. While military logic favours the nuclear arms route, political logic is complicated by a variety of considerations, internal and external, and they raise extremely difficult questions. There might well be alternative options of a non-nuclear nature that need to be explored with Pakistan and China for mutual security. At any rate, whether or not we go nuclear, the conventional strength of India should always be more than equal to any conventional threat from any quarter. The ideal arrangement would be for India and Pakistan to remain without nuclear weapons, leaving it to the art and craft of diplomacy to provide the verbal clothing for it.

The Kashmir Question

Among the traumatic legacies of partition, the unresolved question of Kashmir, fought over thrice so far, haunts our collective consciousness as a ghost that materialises from time to time, and lately as the ugly face of terrorism behind which hides the uglier reality of Pakistan spoiling for another round of war with India. And Kashmir itself, that unhappy paradise on earth, remains divided between India and Pakistan by a military line of control. With the passage of time and the free and facile media coverage of changing situations, the origins of this problem are fading from people's memories. If we are to apply our minds to it, we should be aware of the origins and the essential facts.

Pakistan accepted a Standstill Agreement with Kashmir in August 1947 for one year, during which period Kashmir was to decide whether it would accede to India or Pakistan. But only a few weeks later on 24 October 1947 in violation of the Standstill Agreement Pakistan unleashed into Kashmir hordes of armed frontier tribesmen backed by the Pakistani army, whose objective was to overrun the territory by force and confront the world with a *fait accompli*. Evidently, Pakistan had neither the patience to wait for a year, nor the stomach to digest the results of the elections to be held in Kashmir, which would have been won by the National Conference and gone against Pakistan. And so Pakistan chose the path of aggression.

Kashmir could turn for help nowhere except to India, and it acceded to India so as to enable India legally to go to its defence. Kashmir's accession was unconditional, and in the form and manner prescribed for it. The legality of its accession was unquestionable, and that is what made Pakistan's attack on Kashmir an act of aggression against India and formed the basis for India's complaint to the U.N. At no time did the UN question the status of Kashmir as an integral part of India, or the right of India to defend Kashmir. In fact, the UN said in its resolutions that the primary pre-condition for restoration of peace was for Pakistan first to vacate the territory of Kashmir and withdraw its troops and tribesmen.

The refusal of Pakistan to withdraw, and the use of the area under its occupation as a base for terrorists' training and attacks against India is the problem facing us. India has the legal right to recover its territory under Pakistan's occupation, and indeed to take direct action to destroy terrorist bases in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. As to whether we should do so and when is a matter for decision for our Government, which will doubtless take into account other considerations.

Without prejudice to our right to retake our territory under Pakistan's occupation, we have signed the Simla Agreement of 3 July 1972, which stipulates that at a mutually convenient time the two parties will meet "to discuss the question of a final settlement of Jammu & Kashmir". What these words mean has not been spelt out. But from our point of view, what is *not* final is the illegal occupation of parts of Kashmir by Pakistan, and that should have the first order of priority in our discussion.

For according to international law dereliction of territory is a mode of losing it, corresponding to occupation of territory as a mode of acquiring it. We should not abandon our legal claim to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Nor can we agree to Pakistan acquiring it by the mere fact of occupying it by force. Acquisition of territory through aggression is impermissible and no claims may be preferred on that basis. This principle has been re-affirmed by the UN often enough, and also in relation to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

Another point to bear in mind is that while a plebiscite may have been the answer if the pre-conditions for it had been fulfilled 43 years ago, it is foolish to pretend that time and circumstance have stood still since then. It is a well-known principle of international law that an agreement is concluded under the tacit condition—*rebus sic stantibus*—i.e., a vital change of circumstances is a recognised ground for its dissolution. Our conditional agreement to a plebiscite 43 years ago was an ad hoc arrangement to meet the circumstances prevailing then, and ten years later Krishna Menon informed the UN Security Council in 1957 that circumstances having radically altered, the arrangement was no longer valid. Gunnar Jarring, the UN Representative, who visited Kashmir reported in 1957 that the plebiscite arrangement had already passed the point of diminishing returns. To harp on a plebiscite still is nothing short of political banditry, supported as it is by the forces of terrorism and aggression.

It is premature to speculate on the terms of a final settlement until terrorism is liquidated in Kashmir and Pakistan's behaviour conforms to international law and the UN Charter.

Rebirth of the UN

A point often lost sight of is that there is at present a world system and it is the creation of the victorious powers of the last war, especially the USA and the USSR. They established it as the UN Organization

through which to exercise their authority and power for maintenance of international peace and security. But because of their cold war they had been using their power to divide the UN. And now that their relations have entered a new phase of constructive cooperation for world peace and human survival, the general expectation is that they will work together to strengthen the UN in the manner envisaged in its Charter. At the same time, there has always been the apprehension that unless the UN is vigilant, superpower cooperation might degenerate into some form of condominium or hegemony, with the UN providing the legal cover for it.

The future of the UN depends on whether present American attitudes will change. For self-serving reasons the USA has been treating the UN as an "enemy", an utterly preposterous position for the State that fathered the UN. The reason for this extraordinary *volte face* is the isolation of the USA in the General Assembly of the UN on issues concerning mainly Israel and nuclear weapons. For its self-imposed isolation the USA accused the General Assembly of "tyranny of the majority". During the first fifteen years of the UN's existence it was the USA that commanded the majority in the General Assembly, but that was presumably a period of benevolent dictatorship of the US majority! Such descriptions are infantile, because the General Assembly's powers are limited to making non-binding recommendations. If a State does not like a particular recommendation, it simply ignores it. But it is unwarranted for a State to take hostile action against the UN just because it is unhappy with the majority view, as the USA has done. On the other hand, the USA is quite happy with the Security Council, where it has the right to veto the majority view! It is this waspish attitude that is not in keeping with US dignity and has been the cause of adverse comment. The solution to this artificial American dilemma is not conversion of the General Assembly into a forum for negotiating consensus, for in practice consensus is interpreted as unanimity or absence of opposition, and that invariably produces either the lowest common denominator of agreement which is inadequate, or the maintenance of the status quo which is the problem. The American allergy to the toothless majority at the UN is quite incomprehensible.

Since 1988 there have been welcome signs of a stable cease fire in the cold war. It is not often realized that the cold war was no less than a new manifestation of the art of war through escalation in particular of nuclear threats intended to deter the enemy from committing aggression. As a means of war prevention, the nuclear deterrent may have had its uses, questionable though it has been because of the inherent

high risks. But in the present circumstances of emerging entente between the superpowers, war prevention would appropriately have to be through peace-making, using the considerable authority and powers of the Security Council of the UN. If the United Kingdom, France and China were to join the superpowers in cooperative efforts for peace, supported by the economic weight of the EEC, the FRG and Japan, the United Nations will be strengthened beyond recognition; it will be born again.

Peaceful Resolution of Disputes

The first fruits of Soviet-American cooperation have been cease fires in hot wars in which they were indirectly involved, and that is a striking manifestation of the use of their power for peace. But it is not enough merely to stop conflicts; it is essential to follow up cease fires with concrete actions to bring parties to disputes to the negotiating process for peaceul resolution of their differences within feasible time-frames. The disputants are not likely to respond positively to this approach as long as they get arms, and the pressures on them are half-hearted. Although the superpowers have the capability, they have not so far shown the political will to apply adequate pressure for peaceful settlement of third world disputes. They may well be too preoccupied with their own domestic problems and regional issues to interest themselves in the solution of distant disputes. Why indeed should they be more interested in peace than the disputants?

Indifference to peaceful settlement of disputes is at the root of several third world problems, such as regional wars, foreign intervention, arms races, refugees, political instability, economic bankruptcy, etc. A dispute-free third world is its best guarantee of security and stability. Quite obviously, third world countries are expected to utilize the momentum of change in superpower relations and initiate steps for settling outstanding disputes themselves. As the only international war-prevention agency, the UN should issue a mandatory directive giving disputants a fixed time to settle their disputes, failing which to face collective sanctions under Chapter VII of its Charter. The methods recommended for peaceful resolution of disputes are set out in Chapter VI of the Charter, and I feel that compulsory arbitration should be accepted as the positive alternative to war. There is no other civilized way of avoiding war.

If the UN is to succeed as an experiment and fulfil its high purposes,

it must establish a collective scurity system, without which there will be little incentive for peaceful settlement of disputes. And this cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the superpowers and the other great powers. It will be necessary also in the interests of peace to redefine the parameters of certain principles such as self-defence, self-determination and external non-intervention in internal affairs of States. The misinterpretation of the first two principles has been the source of much tension and conflict, and the third principle has been used as a cover for violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait is the first major test of the UN in the post-cold war period of Great Power cooperation. The unprecedented unity of the Security Council in imposing economic sanctions against Iraq is a warning to potential aggressors. The climate is appropriate for setting up a U.N. collective security system, as stipulated in the UN Charter, one which would have both a UN Force and a special machinery for peaceful resolution of disputes, including compulsory arbitration.

The Security Council has now only 15 members out of a total UN membership of 160 States. It should be expanded to 25 members, so as to include 10 medium Powers with potential to share the burden of responsibility for preserving peace. They should be re-elected every two years by convention, but without the veto right. I would nominate for this role the following ten States:- Germany, Japan, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Nigeria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and India.

The General Assembly should be empowered to take legally binding decisions by a two-third majority vote on matters to be specified outside the competence of the Security Council. The voting should be changed to give due weightage to the member States' budgetary contributions and populations. Voting on the basis of one member one vote should first be taken and then computed in terms of contributions and populations with the help of computers. If the final result shows a two-third majority vote in each of the three methods of counting, the decision should be regard as binding.

The Internal Scene

The independence of India was the product of a tour de force, a mass movement organised by Mahatma Gandhi for assertion of the sovereignty of the people, and their vote conferred legitimacy on

parliamentary democracy. Popular democratic government cannot be an end in itself, unless it guarantees for the people good government, freedom, equality, justice and a decent standard of living. Our people are learning fast that they are not getting all this by changing governments at election time. They know that elections are being exploited by those who earn their livelihood by it. This has caused distortions of democracy, criminalised politics, bred corruption and could lead to the system's dissolution in anarchy. Are we perhaps witnessing the twilight years of democracy? Is our democracy a living lie? To what extent is the people's sovereignty being subverted in practice?

Confidence in politicians has never been lower in public estimation. Barring exceptions so rare as to be freaks or miracles, nowadays politicians do not lead public opinion, but merely register its diversity. Their concern is not whether a particular policy, or course of action is good for the nation, but rather whether it is popular. They rationalise their servitude by claiming to be the elected servants of the people. When politicians succumb to a variety of conflicting pressures, the executive or the government becomes enfeebled and paralysed, and the resulting devitalisation of governing power causes a functional derangement in its relationship with the people. The survival of the State as a free society is then imperilled, and the people may be compelled to acquire the power they are incapable of exercising.

This is more than likely in the Indian situation of great caste diversity, linguistic rivalry, religious antagonisms, social inequality and economic disparity. Where each group with a separate and distinct identity is counted in millions, terms such as minorities and majorities lose their usual political meanings in democracy, and acquire aspirations and ambitions that lie at the roots of narrow self determination. National disintegration then becomes an active force, while national integration remains a passive principle.

There are tenacious symptoms of ethnic alienation in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam. Elsewhere there are demands for abolition of English that will break the only link with non-Hindi States. Rural folk are being organised to range themselves against urbanites, and this will have disastrous consequences in urban areas where slum populations from the rural hinterland constitute the majority. Communal conflicts erupt with alarming frequency. Each caste is bent on securing its own rightful quota of jobs in proportion to its numbers. A political leader is pressing for 40 percent reservation in the Parliament for those below the poverty line numbering 340 millions.

Is our tryst with destiny to be with mediocrities and self- determining

castes and communities, each wallowing in its poverty and the spurious sovereignty of its own anarchy? Such a prospect seems more real and likely than a social revolution. For each group is intent on increasing its numbers by out-breeding the others in voting strength and political leverage. Politicians turn a blind eye to this consuming passion. Things have reached such a pass that rather than seek political settlement, people resort to judicial intervention far too often for the good of the judiciary. And the administration calls upon the army to maintain law and order much too often than is good for its own health. These are unmistakable signs of crumbling of democratic rule, and the inevitable response to this desperate situation may well be some form of authoritarian rule to stem the rot, rather than "an aristocracy of blackguards", to quote Lord Byron.

The Majority Community

The link between State and religion was a part of India's historical experience for centuries until the establishment of British rule, which was secular in character. As was to be expected, independent India emerged constitutionally as a secular State. The movement for independence had been founded necessarily on non-communal nationalism transcending religious differences. The partition of India, resulting from the creation of Pakistan on grounds of religion, dealt the first blow to Indian secularism. It could also be said that Pakistan would not have come about, if Muslims and Hindus (barring a few leaders) had been secular in thought, deed and spirit. They were not, and it was natural that the Hindu majority should want India to be a Hindu State, as a riposte to Pakistan.

Politicians freely used religion and caste for seeking electoral support, and secularism with its attraction for minorities also became a potent force at elections. In tradition-bound semi-literate India with its multiple diversities and half its population below the poverty line, religion and caste assume disproportionate importance. In the other India too secularism is never more than skin-deep. It is viewed as an intellectual abstraction, rather like Paul Verlaine's dream-woman "who is never quite the same, and never quite another".

Thus, on the one hand there is profound frustration among Hindus at being unable to establish a Hindu State. On the other hand, there is the legitimate demand of minorities for equal rights, the denial of which would diminish the virtue of a Hindu State. The dilemma becomes

clearer when one looks at the communal breakdown of Indian society, which is as follows:- Muslims form 15%, Sikhs 2 1/2%, Christians 2 1/2%, scheduled tribes 10%, scheduled castes 20%, backward castes 35%, and upper castes 15%. Each of these groups is in a minority in relation to the rest, and it is not surprising that each should display in varying degrees the misgivings of minorities.

The three Hindu caste groups can together form a majority of 70% or more, but for the fact that caste differences have kept them apart. The ancient outmoded caste system, once the mandate of heaven, is now an infernal abomination in a modern practising democracy. If democracy is to prevail, the caste system has to go with all the discriminations pertaining thereto. The initiative to liquidate this anachronism has to come necessarily from the intellectual vanguard and the enlightened leaders of the community, so as to keep pace with the times and the requirements of human dignity, equality and unity.

Secularism

The pull of religion will remain strong in India for the foreseeable future. I see no likelihood of God becoming a victim of science and technology. Most Indian scientists and academics have no inner conflict from the practice of religion and the worship of science. Evidently, they keep God in his place and don't let him interfere in mundane matters. Religion is a psychological necessity for most Indians, and politics should leave religion alone for the good of both. What is needed in India is a common moral basis for the co-existence in peace of all religions, something that Mahatma Gandhi had attempted to propagate at his prayer meetings. It is a shame that such meetings were not continued by the religious leaders themselves, who had clearly learnt nothing from them!

I am reminded of a rather famous Chinese philosopher who, like Gandhiji, believed in the ethical approach to politics—Kung Futse known as Confucius. He aimed at political order by laying the practical basis for it in a moral order, and not merely through the rigid enforcement of state law. His was essentially a humanist attitude in human relationships, which is so necessary in our own context of diverse religions contending for supremacy. The doctrine of Confucius was "the measure of man is man", which he thought would make it possible for the common man to follow the highest instincts of his own human nature, and not be deterred by some divine ideal of perfection. He said

"all men are created equal in goodness of heart", and he believed in the power of good example set by the ruling class, which was expected to belong to a moral upper class. In practice it meant living up to one's own moral self. Our philosopher-President Radhakrishnan said, "morality is a working arrangement, a matter of convention, and its sanction is social necessity", and he equated God with "the highest good, the moral ideal". I think that the role of all religions in India should be to link ethics with politics for the greater good of the latter.

Indira Gandhi's Death

I remember well the terrible sense of deprivation and despair I felt on hearing the news of Indira Gandhi's assassination. The immensity of her loss, for she had grown large in the minds of people in all countries, and her heroic end at the hands of those charged with protecting her, will fire the imagination of men and women for generations to come. It has all the dimensions of a Greek tragedy of ancient times. For those of her own generation it had a heart-rending personal dimension associated with the birth pangs and growing up of independent India. It was the end of something personal in one's life, and like that of Mahatma Gandhi's, her death too diminished India and left a guilt complex.

The governance of India under a democratic secular constitution is the most complex management problem in the world, compounded as it is by the tremendous diversity and the sheer numerical weight of her population. Most Indians turn a blind eye to the enormity of the problems, and expect the Prime Minister to wave a magic wand and perform miracles. If the Prime Minister does not do so, they destroy him or her with all the savagery of personal revenge. Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister did what she could for her country and people within the limitations of her constitutional powers and her governmental machinery, despite the political indiscipline of the Opposition and the personal irresponsibility of some members of her own party. Her successes were due largely to the whole-hearted support she received from the people, while her failures were due mainly to the wrong advice given by self-seekers and the like, so that she was never sure whom to trust. I had the feeling that she had been let down so often by so many that a halo of loneliness had grown about her. But her great moral and physical courage and spiritual strength sustained her through many a vicissitude.

While I believe that Operation Blue Star was a major political blunder, which I feel sure was authorized by her with the greatest of reluctance and mental reservation, the Sikh community as a whole should have been far more active in preventing the misuse of its sacred Golden Temple by a few as a military garrison for political purposes. There was never any threat or danger to the Sikh religion as such. The failure of the Sikh community to preserve the sanctity of its Temple raises general questions about the responsibility of all religious groups to maintain the sanctity of their places of worship by purging them of all instruments of violence. I find it incredible that the progressive and honourable Sikh community should have allowed its conscience to be held hostage by an obscurantist priesthood that was itself at the mercy of a minority whose only creed was violence.

India's Image Abroad

There has always been a vast gulf between our public posturings and official propaganda abroad and the revolting realities at home, one that cannot possibly be bridged by diplomatic blarney, or by pouring more money into public relations and press coverage to polish the tarnished image. What is the reality as seen through the eyes of foreign diplomats, correspondents and tourists?

We like to brag that India is the world's largest democracy. Says the foreigner: "So what? Are you equating India with the USA?"

We say that India has the third largest body of scientists and technicians in the world. Has quantity rather than quality now become our hallmark? But then our scientists have exploded a nuclear device and also fired an intermediate range ballistic missile, thus crashing our way into the celestial club of demonic powers. Whereas, in fact, a host of countries in Europe and elsewhere can perform these feats of strength and more, but for their self-imposed self-restraint.

For its own reasons and obviously to encourage regional powers to maintain regional peace, the USA chose to refer to India as "a regional and an emerging world power"! This specious adulation has gone to our heads, and we went berserk with comic heroics. We airlifted a military sledgehammer to swat marauding mosquitoes in the Maldives. And we also despatched a massive military force to keep the peace in a civil war in Sri Lanka, and ended up by fighting the very people we went to protect! We have a lot to learn about power and its use.

Our culture is unique, our philosophy profound, and neither is in

need of export promotion, because the genuine seekers come to India. But some of our *soi-disant* living gods go abroad promising instant bliss and earn us in return a wealth of opprobrium, and cast a shadow on our image.

There is no doubt that our economic growth has been the stuff of dreams, and there is ample evidence of prosperity, but side by side with it we have the most appalling poverty and squalor, which is hard to explain away to foreigners. The population below the poverty line was recently reported to be some 230 million. Above this line are 140 million people who have the purchasing power to attract foreign investment, and who live on the tip of the poverty volcano beneath. The volcano grows larger and faster than the economy above it.

Our social development leaves much to be desired. The questions put to me abroad by concerned foreigners returning from India are: "Why are brides burnt in middle class families? Why are there so many communal riots, caste conflicts, police atrocities, bonded labour, etc.? Why do people urinate in streets, defecate between railway lines, and scatter garbage where they like? And the ubiquitous diseased and deformed beggars at street crossings—why in India and nowhere else? Yet what has surprised me is the unbelievable goodwill that exists abroad for India and her people, despite our warts, pimples and sores. The ordinary Indian appears to a foreigner as a simple religious person working hard to support his family, who believes in "live and let live", and whose vegetarianism sets him apart as someone who cannot really be bad. He evokes compassion, pity and concern in most foreigners, who nevertheless wonder why guys like him are collectively so helpless! And the most commonly asked question is: "Why don't you control your population growth as other countries have done?" The failures of our governments have apparently impressed foreigners much more than our successes have blinded us!

Contradictions

The principal failure of all our governments at the Centre and State levels has been their incredibly incompetent, half-hearted and totally inadequate regulation and control over the growth of our population; it is now well beyond our means and resources to provide decent and civilized standards of living for our people. It is affecting the future of India in every sphere—political, economic and social—even to the extent of facilitating its disintegration into separate linguistic and

ethnic entities, before ultimately dissolving in the anarchy of poverty. The symptoms of tensions and conflicts are already everywhere, except that we are blissfully unconscious of their root cause—which is the increasingly intolerable pressures of overpopulation. The rate at which and the manner in which we are breeding makes the end result—unmitigated disaster—distinctly foreseeable, and it would be a mistake to underestimate our capacity to hasten the end! We seem quite content to leave it to the slow pace of literacy, education and economic growth to produce the benefits for trickling down below the poverty line and hopefully inducing the poor to exercise self-restraint in their unbridled breeding habits. Our ruling elected elites apparently need the poverty-stricken multitudes as vote-banks. And they will not even contemplate, much less undertake, the mandatory measures necessary to remove poverty by restricting the birth rate among the poor.

This makes one suspect the presence of a fundamental contradiction, if not weakness, in our otherwise normal national character, one which is shared by all the species of human life in this subcontinent. It is evident also in the inability of the States in the region to make a success of their political systems, whether it is monarchy, military dictatorship or multi-party parliamentary democracy. It is not a systemic failure, but rather its corruption and exploitation by the powers that be to serve their own interests. In the final analysis one could put the blame on human nature itself. The single most complex and difficult problem facing us is our staggering diversity in religion, language, caste, race, etc. and its terrifying numerical magnitude, which invests each diversity with a devastating dynamic for conflict. Indeed it has caused schisms in the Indian soul barely concealed by the thin veneer of secularism. It is this fateful diversity that is the active principle in social disintegration. It has not been possible so far to discover a new supervening basis for social unity, because in a disintegrating situation social tensions keep increasing faster than population growth.

The solution lies in making our system work as it should. For administration, management, science, technology, education, health, etc. we use trained personnel with special skills and qualifications. But for governing the country we use entirely unskilled persons thrown up by elections, their qualifications being that they should not be of unsound mind and not be less than a certain age. This bizarre contradiction, derived from a form of Anglo-Saxon tropical idiocy, should be removed. Those aspiring for political career should be required to have qualifications no less than those of administrators and managers, and possess a clean bill of character. A change in the Constitution to

this effect should be the subject of a popular referendum.

The Importance of the Gorbachev Phenomenon

This century began with hope for man and his individual rights, and might have ended with no hope for mankind in the event of a nuclear war. We have been witnesses to a historical process that is still in the making, that had seen the fall of great empires, the launching of a socialist revolution, the shifting of power bases, giant leaps in science and technology, an endless epidemic of national liberation, and a cold war that had become the normal way of life in the nuclear age.

Mikhail Gorbachev then appeared as the principal initiator of change in two directions. Firstly, he set in motion unilaterally significant cuts in arms and military expenditure, which caused a downward spiral, a sort of disarmament race, with his initiatives influencing similar measures in other countries. It is too soon to say how far this trend will go in the direction of a de-militarized and disarmed Europe, because the political situation in Central and Eastern Europe is in a state of flux, and the future of European security is not clear. But one thing is clear enough, and it is that Europeans are determined not to allow Europe to become again an active theatre of war. While the chances of war between the USA and the USSR appear to have diminished, their stockpiles of military hardware are still considerable, and their testing and continued deployment remain a source of concern. Hopefully, with increasing European political stability, the prospects will improve for substantial arms and forces reductions, and the present military pacts may well be modified by new arrangements for common European security.

Secondly, Gorbachev's economic and political reforms – perestroika and glasnost – in the Soviet Union have spilled over into Eastern Europe and raised questions about the legitimacy of the system of political domination by the Communist Party, the role of people's participation in the political process, the scope of self-determination, the basis of social peace and the uses of the market mechanism. They have caused massive and generally peaceful demonstrations, reminiscent of Gandhiji's non-violent expressions of popular will, for free elections on a multi-party basis to representative and governing bodies, involving constitutional changes, and spelling the end of the Communist Party's monopoly of power. This radical movement for change by its very nature is unstoppable until human

rights and freedoms in their fullness are secured by the people. As old disciplines make way for new freedoms, some benefits of the old system may have to be retained, while waiting for the promises of the new way of life to be fulfilled. There is no quick-fix, no textbook solution; nor can any one ideology provide all the answers. Solutions to problems will depend on local factors, pragmatism, ideological flexibility, and the realistic wisdom of tomorrow's leaders, and no longer on Marxist dogma and Lenin's interpretations.

The struggle between conservatives and new liberal forces will run its course through ups and downs – not in the former frame of the supernatural hold of Marx and Lenin on men's minds, but in the context of present human needs – until it stabilizes in an equilibrium which is bound to vary from country to country. It is really a matter of different peoples and countries according to their circumstances discovering new means and methods for realizing their rights and aspirations. It would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion either that communism is dead, or that history is being rolled back to 1914. The socialist revolution of 1917 in the USSR is turning around in an attempt to change the means to fit the ends, and in the process we may see unprecedented modifications of both communism and capitalism and their integration in new economic systems and practices. But communism as an ideology will continue to have its appeal for peoples and countries of the third world, whose poverty will make them vulnerable to it.

Another new development is the manifestation of people's awareness as nations, which they once were before being submerged in the ideological morass, and their search for new forms of association while retaining their separate national identities. Sooner or later, common interests will emerge as the decisive factor in new systems and balances based on equations between rights and obligations, and between national interests and regional dependences. It would call for a rare capacity for concession by those required to yield, and an uncommon facility for compromise by those who make demands.

The re-unification of Germany is fraught with imponderables of history repeating itself and evokes nightmares in other European countries. Yet it was a legitimate popular demand and had to be conceded. However, the overriding imperative of avoiding war in Europe would require unified Germany to accept concomitant self-restraints and obligations for maintenance of peace. Even so, there will still remain the fear of possible conversion of unified German economic power into aspects of political hegemony, and that would be

a matter of wider international concern. There is also the terrible apprehension that demands for reversion to pre-war borders might assume a new sense of historic mission. The present borders in Europe were recognized by the Helsinki Accords of 1975 at a time when some countries were under bloc discipline, but now that people's power is emerging in the same countries as a political force, there may be calls for revision of some borders. Obviously there will be strong objection to revising some and not other borders. I see no merit in revising borders simply because of changes in government as a result of free elections.

The situation in the Soviet Union is different and very complex. It has been under the rule of the Communist Party for over seventy years, and has several achievements to its credit in many areas of human endeavour, though its record in human rights has been dismal. There is no doubt that Russian people too would like to terminate the monopoly of power hitherto enjoyed by the Communist Party, and it can only be a matter of time before other parties also join in the political process. A far more serious problem is the demand for secession made by some constituent units of the Soviet Union, caused by their disenchantment with the performance of their Communist Party. With the eventual equalization of the Communist Party with other parties, demands for secession may be withdrawn by some units, but may persist in some other units. The concept of the Union stems from the fact that the ruling party in all units is the Communist Party. In the long run, a new basis for unity in diversity has to be found and the solutions may vary from conversion of the Union into a loose form of federation to acceptance of the unavoidable secession of some units. If free rein were to be given to the pulls of self-determination, many units after having tasted the heady wine of freedom might well want to return to the greater Russian fold for security and mutual economic benefit under new arrangements for free association.

Looked at only from the point of view of Russian security, the secession of some units should not really diminish security, because four large units constitute the essential core of Russia, which is a formidable land mass from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea and right across to the Pacific Ocean with all the resources needed to support the mighty Russian economic and military machine. Indeed, the secession of a few small appendages should relieve Russia of the burden of supporting them. But Russian leaders would have to acquire a good deal more of self-assurance and political realism to make a virtue of giving up what they cannot hold. They would have to realize that

communism is not the cement that binds, and freedom is the sacred fire that burns all bonds. It is sterile, however, to speculate on the political face of changing USSR, or of Russian nationalism, except to say that the necessity of preserving peace may allow new entities and forms of association to appear on the stage with their old identities intact. The millenium is not round the corner, for neither multiparty democracy nor market-oriented economies can be constructed overnight.

Meanwhile, security will remain a legitimate concern. There is likely to be little change in the distribution of military power in the foreseeable future. The ongoing arms negotiations between the superpowers are not designed to result in disarmament, but in lower holdings of arms. By any standards these holdings would be very much in excess of the requirements for peace, as peace would be maintained through mutual deterrence at minimal levels of nuclear arms. Substantial military power, therefore, would remain concentrated in the USA and the USSR. The retreat of ideology from the east-west equation raises the question of the new dialectic for maintaining arms stockpiles and the arms race as well. The British and French arms and forces would remain intact because of their necessity for European peace, although their deployment levels may be changed or reduced. The original rationale for military alliances being no longer valid, there may be a loosening of their commitments, and if common security for Europe emerges as a goal, there may be a new defence structure. An important factor in the future will be economic power; new centres of such power have already appeared in Japan, FRG and EEC and they too will play a crucial role in shaping the world to come. They may well seek to safeguard their economic power by enhancing their military strength, both conventional and nuclear. They ought to be made permanent members of the UN Security Council by electing them every two years without the right of veto.

What will be the impact of the Gorbachev phenomenon on third world countries? Not much in the short run, for the USSR will continue to maintain its relations at inter-state levels. But the future of Communist Parties in the third world would be affected by declining support, spiritual and material, from the Soviet fountain-head, unless China replaces it, which is doubtful. Secession of constituent units from the USSR through national self-determination may indirectly have an adverse impact in countries where the basis of unity in diversity is fragile. In the long run, third world countries would be affected by the emerging entente in east-west relations, some for the better and some

otherwise.

The future of the world is being determined in Europe. The forces of war and of ideology are receding, and the protest against nuclear arms by peace movements is continuing. Explosions of popular will for human rights, fundamental freedoms, national self-determination and for "peace dividends" will become more frequent. But popular expectations are far ahead of the ability of governments to meet them. If the concept of a Common European House were to materialize, military alliances would be unnecessary, and security would have to be provided through peaceful methods of settling disputes. Europe is moving into an era of expanding liberalism in freedom and peace, in which science and technology will play a key role in the service of man and mankind. Third world countries in different stages of development and degrees of impoverishment will pose the most difficult existential and ethical problems of the next century. For solving them a global plan is clearly needed based on goodwill, cooperation and practical common sense, as well as a realistic relationship between resources and population growth.

Malthusian Holocaust

In India and in the other countries of this subcontinent the poor have been pitilessly multiplying and causing the same symptoms of intolerable pressures of overpopulation. There is every probability of de-humanization of society, and a Malthusian nightmare is the appalling reality awaiting these countries, because the poor constitute the preponderant majority of their populations. Their politicians do not seem to realize that it is the main threat to the survival of their nation states. In failing to overcome this problem of problems, they are ranged against only themselves, against their own complacency, weakness of will, inability to take hard decisions and a strange reluctance to tell their people the awful truth and its catastrophic consequences. Their demographers have been ringing alarm bells for years, and they think it is already too late to leave it only to education and development to solve the problem. There is an air of unreality in the intelligentsia of these countries holding seminars on every conceivable subject, except their overpopulation. The indifference of the rest of the world to the unfolding of this tragedy in the subcontinent is no more than their reaction to our own indifference to it.

Obiter Dicta

During the cold war years it never used to surprise me when Americans sought elucidation of non-alignment, which had been propagated widely as our foreign policy, as if that was all there was to it. I would reply that it was Jeffersonian in conception, free of foreign entanglements in the pursuit of independence in foreign policy, but Indian in execution with regard to our national interests. This retort had the usual effect of stopping further interrogation, though it did not extinguish American misgivings about India, another democracy, choosing not to be with them, and confirmed their belief that those not with them were against them. But it has always surprised me why Russians never asked me to clarify our non-alignment. Either they felt that India could have done worse, or they took the practical view that those not with them were not ipso facto against them, although I am sure they questioned fellow communists like Cuba and Yugoslavia about their brand of non-alignment. Now that the cold war is over, superpower military alliances are rapidly losing their raison d'etre and the communist ideology has ceased to be the terrifying menace it once was. Non-aligned countries wear their saffron badges of independence for having survived the cold war, and the non-aligned movement finds its door thrown open to the superpowers to join it, but they will not do so. Having eliminated smallpox, the need for vaccination has also been eliminated. It is not comprehensible why India continues to be a fanatic apostle of non-alignment, when the need for it has disappeared. Between what evils are we now non-aligned?

In the circumstances it is not surprising that the question most often put in a cynical, semi-derisive and semi-serious way is – What is India's foreign policy? – with the implication that there is none. This question arises, because we had got used to the answer that ours is a policy of non-alignment. Actually, India's foreign policy represents the sum total of relations with foreign countries, our unresolved disputes and other problems on ice, treaty commitments, principles and rules of international law, and of course in the final count the gains and losses. This overall picture of foreign affairs cannot be summed up in one slogan such as non-alignment, or in some anodyne formula like peace and friendship, because it is the product of many different policies responding to many different situations. Our penchant for simplifying complex realities has its origin in our trying to understand metaphysical truths by reducing multiplicities to a single unified identity, like That art Thou, or I am that I am. If we were to apply this method, the answer to-what

is India's foreign policy?-would be "It is what it is!"

Our policy concerning persons of Indian origin overseas has been unexceptionable. Nehru advised them to become citizens of the countries of their domicile, which they did. But as a matter of State policy that can be described only as racist, our people were discriminated against, deprived of their livelihood and properties and forced out of countries. India had tried to help them to the extent possible, but it was limited by law and circumstance. The mistake we made was in not anticipating the worst and in not having contingency plans for meeting the crises. In the result we were caught napping when the crises suddenly came down upon us, and overseas Indians found themselves refugees overnight. I recommended to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that we should study each situation of overseas Indians and prepare for each group of them plans for dealing with anticipated crises, and I put forward my own expectations and ideas as to what could be done. She was very receptive to my thinking and said she would consult the mandarins and reply to me. Some time later she wrote to me saying – "For reasons I cannot fathom, your bureaucratic colleagues are opposed to your ideas, as they are unrelated to live issues". True enough, they were not live issues, but they were by no means dead, and were liable to come alive and kicking any time. Also, my colleagues were probably reflecting the timidity of the political echelons prone to turn down any proposal unless assured beforehand of its success. I chose not to press my ideas against the deeply entrenched passion for cliches like "let sleeping dogs lie", "let us not rock the boat", "leave well alone", "let us wait on events and see", etc, which are the chronic reasons for doing nothing with a great deal of diplomatic skill.

Another idee fixe is that only our views on foreign affairs should be publicised in our media to the exclusion of contrary views expressed by other countries. The result is a sickening one-sided picture always favourable to us. For example, during foreign VIP visits to India and Indian VIP visits abroad our media reports what our leaders have said, and seldom about the responses and significant silences of foreign personalities. I used to draw the attention of our press corps at the UN to important pronouncements made by foreign statesmen, but they would not transmit them for lack of interest, or for lack of funds. If they found their way into our media, it was because they were picked up from foreign news agency transmissions. Our reading public is given a picture of only Indian representatives spouting forth profound views on all manner of world problems at international conferences, where

apparently the others remain spellbound in silent speechless adoration. This sort of selective publicity is self-defeating, and has a deadening effect on its credibility.

I was once asked to lead our delegation in some non-commercial negotiations, and having studied the brief I sought some additional information, which I was given by the experts with all the fervour and conviction of a proselytising priest. There seemed no doubt that our cause was right and that we had a cast- iron case. But for me it was not enough, for I could not believe that the other side had no case at all. And so I wanted to know about the other side's case, its weak points and particularly about the weaknesses in our own case, which would be exploited by them. My queries were met with a funereal silence and stunned disbelief. Either our experts were ignorant, or they had not done their home work. I broke up our delegation into two groups, one representing the other side and the other representing our side, and we rehearsed for the negotiations to come. It was a novel experience for us and much benefit was derived from it. I was asked who had given me this idea, and I said it was a Russian Chessmaster. The actual negotiation ended in a result slightly tilted in our favour, because of our tactical intransigence on some issues. Our diplomats often complain that they are told to negotiate without precise instructions and with no leeway or latitude even in tactics. As one of them told me, he found himself in endless rounds of repetitious wrangling during which he sometimes was on a stationary bicycle, or playing cricket with a straight bat, or turning spectacular intellectual somersaults in order to hold fast to his fixed position!

When I joined the diplomatic service, I had grandiose notions about India's future role in world affairs. Actually, they were lying buried in my subconscious, until brought to the surface by Dalip Singh, a member of the FPSC, when he questioned me during my interview for the IFS/IAS. I said that "our area of strategic interest stretched from the Gulf in the west, to Mauritius in the south, to Singapore in the east and to the high Himalayas in the north. That was the position for British India, and I felt that we would have to inherit that same responsibility, or we would be cut down to size. Among the variables in friends would be USA, UK, USSR and China, but our non-variable enemy would be Pakistan". This interview took place on 29 January 1948, and it was brought to an end by Dalip Singh asking me a question in vogue then:- "Tell me, if you had to choose between your friend and your country, what would be your choice?" I replied – "My friend of course, for my country can do without me." And he then asked the last question – .

"Do you have any particular ideology?" My reply was – No, Sir; I doubt if I would allow any ideology or religion to make a prisoner of my mind. – The interesting thing is that my answers to these questions would still be the same today!

Old Age

Growing old is a biological catastrophe. I try to keep up the body's functions pedalling furiously on a stationary bicycle. The intellect has been holding its own so far, though thoughts come and go faster than words to give expression to them. Unread books bought years ago are devoured before eyesight and memory fail. There is time now to think of the spirit and its role.

For me the most chilling cry down the ages has been that of Christ on the cross – "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Equally agonising has been Arjuna's cry – "I will not fight, if to kill is to sin", and the chilling divine response – "Thou shalt not falter in thy duty, for there is no greater good than a war enjoined by duty"!

There is an ancient spiritual axiom in Katha Upanishad – "A certain wise man turned his gaze inward and saw the divine self within". This ego-less spiritual core of goodness lends a metaphysical aspect to the material body and the egoistic mind, both of which are as familiar as the spirit is unfamiliar to most of us. But there are some who claim to have known the spirit through meditation, prayer and the final inexplicable act of grace, and to have experienced ineffable peace. And it is said to have made them better humans. Any experience that spiritualises personality and makes better humans of us in the stressful state of living today and tomorrow is worth acquiring. But I don't understand why this faculty of goodness should lie buried so deep within that it is not easy to bring it to the surface.

I cannot believe in re-incarnation of the ashes of cremation, or resurrection of the buried bag of bones, as a corporeal manifestation in the hereafter in time and space unknown. But as a doctrine, it has its earthly uses as a sound psycho-physical inducement to good behaviour in this life in order to qualify for a better life-sentence in the next. I have never felt the slightest desire to be reborn even under the best of possible circumstances. It is enough, I think, if one is remembered for a while after one is gone, and one lives on in the memories of a few for a generation or two. That is the limit of my immortal longings. How one would like to be remembered is thus of short-term interest.

It is perhaps only in retirement that one fully realises, as I do, that one's working life's achievements recede rapidly into the oblivion of inconsequence and irrelevance. In looking back on my life and work, I am disappointed by the fact, according to a scientific discovery, that most humans do not use more than 15 to 20 percent of their brain power. Had I known this earlier, I might have exerted myself much less, for I have the odd feeling that I had needlessly taxed far more than 20 percent of my brain power! The vast reserves of knowledge to be gained by the unused 80 percent of brain power are apparently waiting for the next evolutionary leap forward! As an Irish colleague at the UN said, the most under-developed area in the world is under men's hats – the human brain!

The three-dimensional man – body, mind and spirit – seems to be half way in his evolution from chaos to cosmos, and yet his actions take him backwards and forwards at the same time. The bulk of our people spend their time thinking of sex and food, which explains our explosive population and increased food production. When breeding exceeds food growing, rising numbers increase poverty and social unrest. Despite the absence of supporting evidence, I believe there is hope in man for mankind and I have faith in human potentiality. But here in India one sees more of the individual's devotion to bettering himself than collective efforts for the national good!

Seminar

Not long ago I attended a seminar on racial integration for human betterment. While I was in favour of racial mixing for those inclined towards it, I felt moved to present in verse the surprises one might expect from it:

The seminar,
accepting the challenge of the latest stunt,
the feline dachshund with the pi-dog grunt,
hopes that black with white will copulate,
brown and yellow and all together mate
to breed Nordic niggers, slant-eyed Scots,
enigmatic pig-tailed Hottentots,
phlegmatic Latins, thick-lipped Mongols
and black Indo-Chinese with white moles!

The seminarians were not amused, until some bright lad fed into a

computer the different colours and racial traits, and out came such a staggering variety of human specimens that Nature's own selection seemed to have greater art and beauty. I end on this light note of versification to tempt the reader to turn a few pages to my offering of more serious verse in *Flowers of Grass*.

FLOWERS OF GRASS

INTRODUCTION

I am a dilettante dabbling in poesy from an inner compulsion. My compositions offer glimpses into my other half life, testifying to non-diplomatic emotions, day-dreams, make-beliefs and beginnings of half beliefs. Expressed in various forms of verse, they reveal probably less than they conceal. For me each poem has been a self-exploration up to a point. My intellect alone has been inadequate for voyages of self-discovery. Buffetted about by the crosswinds of truth, or left adrift in the doldrums of doubts, other faculties besides the intellect and other channels of perception have eluded me so far.

Inspirations came from a variety of sources – some imaginary, some real, including other men's flowers. They triggered the beginnings – an illusion, a face in a moving train, a tree swept by the wind, or an unexpected event. And my imagination then took over and moved along from image to thought and to versification, often straying far from the original inspiration to themes and moods unsuspected. My difficulty has always been to know whether to kill the compulsion to make a poem, or when to end the agony of its creation. Denial of self, the ever present unknown, or its indulgence, has been at the core of the dilemma, and I have tried to resolve it by doing a little of both.

I graduated from epileptic punning through occasional nonsense versification to sporadic limericking and eventually to serious poetry. It remained a hidden vice until discovered by the late Chalapathi Rau, Editor of *National Herald*. He came to the United Nations as a delegate in 1955, sat next to me in the Conference Room, and during one of my temporary absences found among my scattered papers a couple of poems I had been working on. He said they had both "body and soul", and published them and several more. In grateful remembrance of him I publish here a selection of my poems.

THE ORCHID

Wind-blown creature of desire,
shyly peeping from ferny hillside
hiding weathered passions and dreams,
consorting with wind and rain.

Fair maiden of flower-decked garden
leaning with a kiss for the favoured few,
of pitiless beauty ever demanding
unyielding in ivoried stare.

Heavy-lidded Mona Lisa of the night
remembering with a smile the suffering
and the exquisite pain of hidden love
for the alien bed in its frame of thorn.

THE MAHATMA'S DEATH

The light is out—

A great hush fills the world,
a mad man tore it from the sky
and flung it bleeding down;
darkness evergrowing shrouds the earth,
men linger in shadows
unbelieving, hoping, praying.

The dawn is black,
unseeing anger swells the heart
a million voices darkly pledge
that vengeance shall be theirs;
millions more in blinding grief
bend beside the martyr's pyre.

A nation mourns,
have we only tears to shed
and remembering, only hate to spread?
shall he twice be killed?

To dream is to half believe—

A vision shines,
ancient trees bend with care
sheltering his shrine of peace;
out of darkness come the pilgrims
their faces alight with truth—
An old man smiles.

THE RAID

Menacing black wings in the sky
moving with the blind swiftness
of sudden inspiration;
heedless of consequence
they swerve and swoop
intent on their prey.

The stilled expectant air quivers
and a whole world is shattered
as monstrous eggs descend
upon flesh and blood and bone
blindly to scatter
a strange peace.

THE SECRET HEART

Look deep into my eyes and you will see
a hidden door gently swaying half-open;
someday you will walk through it with me
for beyond beckons a wooded path by the sea,

warm winds will woo your hair
and laughter and love light your eyes;
nothing shall intrude, no word or thought,
and time must stop. Dark eyes smile,
nose crinkling on mischief bent
mock my lips that burn unkissed,
and playful hands shut the door.
Come, sit by me and lift your face to mine,
let me drink deep of thy dewy lips
the sweet madness of my secret heart.

JAKKO

On some Himalayan yesterday
we shaped our hearts to love's way,
Jakko's lanes were bare and still
as we climbed the beguiling hill.

Shimmering beams of golden light
dart and dare with mischief bright,
we were in love and very gay
that memoried June day.

We lay beside each other's side
we kissed, and laughed and sighed,
the trees above sent birds to spy
and squirrels racing to the sky.

We were young and very brave,
we took as much as we gave,
we set up castles in the air
furnishing them with lover's care.

Jakko's lanes are still there,
but no more castles in the air;
the years have taken their awful toll
nowhere near is the promised goal.

AN ESCAPADE

Across the wind-swept tops
my soul leaps from copse to copse,
lingering over fern and moss,
flowers wild and wind-tossed.

On it goes o'er mountain summit
and distant home-steads sunlit,
hurrying past forbidding crags,
over newly mown hay it lags.

Higher and higher it soars
to find where rising smoke goes;
it sits on a cloud and smiles,
swoops to clatter roof tiles.

It skims over a chimney tall
sheathed in rambling roses small
the forest of firs against the skies
it joins in their ceaseless sighs.

It makes the pines demurely blush
calls to birds in love's first flush;
it basks in slanting beams of gold
and wistfully watches buds unfold.

When the sun goes down
my soul with pensive frown
returns to its allotted home
like a Christian slave in ancient Rome.

IDLE THOUGHTS

I sat on a broken garden wall
draped by a carpet of flowers small,
I drank the rays of the setting sun
and pondered on tomorrow's dawn.

There passed before my tired eyes
a beggarman with soundless sighs
a wounded dog with sightless looks,
our living dead seek their nooks.

I heard a bird calling its mate
with shrill awareness of its fate
a wayward boy had raised his hand;
thoughtless acts divide our land.

A worm slithered across the mud
I wondered if the myna would
slay the worm or let it slide,
chance affects our nation's tide.

Beware of perils of our own creation
they're as leaven to others' ambition;
will the common sense of the few
lead the many into paths new ?

THE GANGES

Pale thin strand in the northern light
winding its way through gorge and defile;
there a proud race its history began
and down the the ages rocked the rhythm—
Ganga, Ganga, Ganganadi.

Where once was heard the urgent hoof-beat
of a prince's steed stamping Vesali way,
the kings of Kashi gathered here by night
in their jewelled glory, gently murmuring
Ganga, Ganga, Ganganadi.

Brightly gleaming in mellowing fields,
hourly growing and hourly flowing
through green groves of mango and sal
shy casuarinas softly whispering
Ganga, Ganga, Ganganadi.

Like nude women stripped of passion
bare sandbanks glare; vagrant winds woo
the saris of laughing maidens who dare
the surly swirl and flying foam, singing
Ganga, Ganga, Ganganadi.

Like some sentinel breed of untidy men
tall in a row the tamarind trees stand
their roots athirst in the scorching sun;
in their shade lie village elders, snoring
Ganga, Ganga, Ganganadi.

Restless waters lapping steaming shores
with sensuous indulgence of cherished memories;
the carved face with its secret smile stares
at passing monks, their ochre robes rustling
Ganga, Ganga, Ganganadi.

The evening comes like a perverse lover
gray with smoke from floating raft-huts;
temple sounds lighten the darkening air
heavy with the oarsmen's eternal chanting
Ganga, Ganga, Ganganadi.

Out of silence comes the ocean's hush
of immense, unfeasted desires, wild with waiting
for virginal waters from high distant hills;
in night's quiet embrace they mingle, sighing
Ganga, Ganga, Ganganadi.

INTIMATIONS OF MORTALITY

Embedded, enveloped and inventoried
I am surrounded by four white walls,
only the window within me is open;
my mind is an island adrift
in a moving sea of tides and currents
along which doubts and beliefs flow
with the cloistered ease of wine-making monks;
multi-coloured pills fuse together in the veins
strange fluids mingling dilate arterial walls
capsules dissolve to release tensions within.

I lie awake, sensitive to sounds and signs—
ambulances scream in the far distance
hearses move discreetly before dawn
a black cat jumps over the half moon
door handles shine like crosses in the night
the long dead spring to mind for no reason
every tremor and twitch seems a death throe
every laboured belch the last breath
and God is reborn with each new fear;
I am loth to sleep lest I waken not.

I wonder if the mind's umbilical cord
leads to the stillness of the unpolluted core,
or to the earthworm's view of the infinite;
I respond to the deep breathing of the earth
I yield to the profound pull of the ocean
I am a creature of the ageless stellar waste
whose life is impermanent and uncertain,
who am I and why, and for how long?
will the mirror on the wall explain it all,
or is an autopsy to be the end of it all?

THAT MORNING

That morning when I heard the news
I went into the street;
there was not a soul in sight,
men seemed afraid of their own company,
armoured cars and tanks were there
and beside them foreigners in twos.

Behind every window faces stared
everything, even the air, stood still;
I went to friends
no words were said but eyes were full
of fearful possibilities; I remember
the food lay uncovered, unconsumed.

That night nothing moved
only bullets and whips.

When the men were taken
the women cried—wives, mothers, sisters—
and the sons who had learnt in school—
between brothers who live together
the door forever remains open—
closed the door.

Their young eyes were red.

BLACK PRIDE

The embroidery is done;
it is a coat of many patches,
varied are the several threads
twining together vying for colour;
white and brown uneasily match
the one shade that stands out,
the black of pride.

A puddle of water in the lane;
when I look into this mirror
I see white clouds in a blue heaven
and a flamboyant in a coat of red;
when I touch this mirror
my hand turns
black with mud.

MWAMBUTSA

I am Mwambutsa, the master;
I stand alone
and these are my serfs.

I am Mwambutsa of the banana grove;
the Gods sent me the heart of the lion
and the pride of the giraffe.

I am Mwambutsa, lord of the cows;
they shall bleed for my people
and all shall drink of their milk.

I am Mwambutsa, the meek;
and this I believe –
Imana made the world
nothing was before him
Imana, the non-material,
sustains but intervenes not;
life like death is inevitable,
whoever approaches him
thrice shall call his name
once from below, again from here,
then from the house above
for three-storied is our kraal
and we may move among all.

I am Mwambutsa, lord of the drums;
guarded by the Gods
I am alone.

THE WEST WIND

Amidst
the green groves,
sloping fields and pasture lands
sparkling streams meander merrily,
children and cows lift their faces
to the fresh invigorating rain;
here once lived men and women
dreaming only of the next life.

Then
came the west wind
scorching the earth into an iron ring
the white sands swirling and hateful,
shrinking the land, blinding the people;
one last glimpse of space
suffocating sobs from stumbling shadows
shatter the desiccated air of flaming huts.

They who run out carry the flame
to light the torch in freedom's name.

THE EAST WIND

Here the earth is silent
for nothing grows.

The east wind cleaves
the red sand like a sword;
no bird song is heard
for birds no longer fly.

The thorn is in flame
ashes fall to the ground;
the empty pond is still
for no water flows.

The sun blinds
black humours rise from the pond;
camels loom in the dust,
a ghostly army lean with thirst.

Beyond the girding hills
birds nest in green glades,
and freedom is on the wing
like an errant bee on a summer day.

THE WELL

Red sand
bleached thorn
scrub and cleft rock
eroded earth.

Anguish in waterless wastes,
swollen tongues and wild eyes
implore as camel and goat
join the dying cow.

Blood by the well
torn limbs twitch
in fateful silence,
only the spear-thrust is heard.

Dust settles on the fallen men
dead women bulging with heads
of children bleeding in the sand
roll into the shallow sun-dried well.

THE JACARANDA

When the jacaranda is in bloom,
has the warm evening wind surprised you with a kiss,
or ruffled your hair and wooed you with its hot fingers?

When the jacaranda is in bloom,
has the cool night air stolen into your blouse
and the gentle dew lathered your loins?

I am the wind in the trees seeking you,
I am the dew weeping on your lawn
when the jacaranda is in bloom.

In the silence of the night you dried my eyes
and let me take that which is yours
underneath the jacaranda tree.

When the jacaranda sheds its blossoms,
so do I shed my purple passions,
with every shedding I live and die a little.

THE BEAST

The train goes rattling into the night
and the men of the United Nations
walk heavily away from the dining car
seeking the solace of the improvised bar;
and I, alone, stand by the window
peering into the dark, daring to see.

Outside the stars dance among the shadows
and the wind brings a distant cry—
the call of the beast—
there it comes, again and again,
and I shiver, alone by the window—
what it is I cannot tell.

The night is dark and I cannot see
the wind brings yet another thing—
the smell of the beast—
there it is, strong and near,
and I shiver, alone, by the window—
what it is I know now.

And I am afraid.

Wounded and angry
it turns away from the herd
the poisoned wound it will keep
it will not let the wind cauterise the pain
it will bear the agony and the shame
and live on for the day
when the fruit of freedom grows bitter
with blame and the memory of hate.

THE ORPHANS

Death swings its steel across the land,
white monsters with black brains,
and black ones with white brains,
their faces the same, brooding of pain;
black and white orphaned at birth
roam the angry tunnels of the mind
lighting the hatreds of the blind;
no thought of freedom in the morn
as fear hourly grows with the corn,
no life can cheat the vengeful hand.

THE TREE

There stole into my embrace a gentle wind
caressing my foliage with a coy smile
and blowing away the dead leaves of doubt;

while the green leaves danced to its challenge
and the young wild buds burst into bloom;
I was the tree and you the gentle wind.

There flew into my arms a humming bird
sheathed in the shimmering fantasy of love,
its ceaseless wings circling my desires' nest
moving like silver shadows among the leaves
weaving an immortal mesh of floating dreams;
I was the tree and you the humming bird.

I felt within my heart a surging shaft of light
a pulsing moment when the eager sap began to rise
to the urgent rhythm and leap of burning grass,
my rampant roots kindling with glowing hope
awakened to the blazing chaos of a cosmic union;
I was the tree and you the dancing flame.

ATHINAI

Now it all comes back to me
vivid as a poplar tree;
your eyes were bright and beckoning
fresh as the early Greek spring;
I rose to their challenge
like a fish through the icehole;
I slipped behind your eyes
to see what beyond lies.

I searched your many-storied mansion
and found it silent, free of passion;
men wandered alone or in pairs
avoiding each other's stares
seeking the road to your heart;
of women there were none, you apart,
and I, like the blind in the street,
followed the pounding of my heart-beat.

I came upon a stairway in the wall
trembling with hope I climbed the steps,
a vagrant wind moved the curtains of the past
unveiling half-remembered ruins within;
a door swung open to reveal a hidden ledge
there you stood with your fingers aflutter
wingless as a falling angel
peering into the depths below.

I walked up to the ledge
and together we looked down;
there many a mile away
like a vast stockpile of cirrus clouds
lay the million flakes and filaments
of Athinai's frustrations since Olympus.
You dared me with your eyes, all of me,
but like the others I too failed you.

THE ACROPOLIS

Desolate, barren, bleached collonnade
old, weather-lined, back to the east
brooding like a disconsolate hunchback,
boulders blunted with smothered memories,
tortured fragments of the gods scattered
in twisted heaps, scar-pitted earth
grimly echoing remembered griefs.

The mind's dark vault is splintered,
like a cracked mirror, distorting the past;
bruised naked breast burns in silence
eyeless sockets stare in sleepless agony
ever watchful like a Nubian eunuch;
and ghosts of lost voices return
with a strange new longing.

THE BALLERINA

Behind your eyes there is
the twilight of a previous life;
behind your smile there is
the aching of ancestral loins;
behind your song there is
the memory of a primeval drum;
behind your dance there is
the shudder of a dying God;
behind your embrace there is
the steel of a thousand thorns.

Is this a dream of divine inconsequence,
an allegory of man's impotence,
or the agony of the universal woman?
To dream is only to half understand
truth is like a beryozka tree
that peels softly to the touch,
scarred by kisses, high and low,
brightly naked in love or woe,
hiding nothing, revealing nothing,
only the futility of all questioning.

BLED

When Bled goes to bed,
the spirits of the living
commune with the dead
on the waters of the lake
by the brooding castle.

All night long they confer
where the mountains meet,
and as darkness fades
a lone boatman pulls
away from the shore.

The sun breaks through,
as Church bells toll
the spirits scatter
the dead to bed
the rest to Bled.

THE STRIKERS

The workers do not need to strike
for they are self-managing;
they share their incomes,
nylon shirts and half hour breaks,
tramways and trolley buses too;
they wear a blue suit to work
and a black one to funerals;
they're not on the edge of abyss
if they are, is it the fault
of self or of management?

The peasants have no need to demonstrate
they manure their fields, mow the corn,
milk the cows and thresh the grain;
they keep their money in feather beds
and build charnel houses for the dead;
they join the party and go to church
they need good weather, not advice
as to the season when to strike;
revolution would have more sense
if it came to them in winter.

Office clerks would never strike
their life is short, their backs arched
they live happily in the past
with ball point pens and leather elbows,
cushioned chairs to ease their piles;
they're semaphores with three red lights
their future lies in Godrej safes,
in protocols and paragraphs;

they lock their minds and lose the key
or lock the key and lose their minds.

The students have teachers they cannot bear
their parents are a silly encumbrance
they crowd in buses, queue in cinemas,
have no incomes or postage stamps,
or invitations to Embassy Receptions;
faceless by day they cry at night
they think sometimes with their own heads
It's their heads they should think about;
the internal organs of the communist man
are no better than the capitalist kind.

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

The World's passions aflame in my heart, leaping
for release I came into a darkened room, groping
for living dreams and your virgin softness yielding;
alone you stood in the latticed sun, shimmering
like dew-drenched rose, your pink petals gleaming
and full, unleashed desires in the curve straining
the hidden deep dark-clustered hollow, aching
painless void, snug solace for eyes wandering;
and in that moment's hush I was God.

Faint murmur of incipient lust, remote urges mingling
in confused abandon, their hooded heads uncovering
dark eyes in darker glow enshrined, shyly advancing
hands that rove in slow savagery, bared teeth stripping
the last veil; like restless reeds in the storm swaying
the relentless heart in tortuous bliss, seeking sighing
against time madly coursing, caroused limbs stiffening;
the dawnless moment in fitful frenzy briefly dawning;
and in that moment's madness I was God.

The world's peace abed in my heart, gentle voices whispering
ceaseless hymns; the mortal seed is unlocked lying,

from tender vine and sturdy oak unburdened; trembling
ekkas totter along, their clatter weakly echoing;
the sun's summer rays meekly crawling, a vision revealing
two doves breathing one mind in lonely space, moulding
a cleansing satisfying dream; words have no meaning
in this wordless void, the quiet grace of an old blessing;
and in that moment's peace I was God.

THE PUMPKINS

When pumpkins bloom in Slavonia
tender corn is cut in fields
green leaves drop from trees
the sap withdraws until spring
a chill wind blows from the east
the ground begins to freeze
the time for ghosts draws near
children have a trick or two
tired old men want
the young to cherish their past,
but pumpkins in bloom insist
on having their own revolution,
envious of their fathers' memories
they gather some for themselves
making up a brave new past
of students riots and l.s.d. trips,
their heroes, the goons of yesterday,
are content being today's film extras;
no ism can breed the new man
nor grant peace with himself,
pumpkins after all will be pumpkins
empty heads full of empty seeds.

THE HAUNTED HILL

In school that day before the fateful hour
boys and girls at their desks were noisy and gay,
vying with each other with eager answers
to clever questions on mental arithmetic,
their minds full of fractions and figures,
pockets bulged with secrets and dreams,
like any other day in that school on the hill.

That morning there was the smell of death,
as German boots and German voices shattered
the peace in the school on that Balkan hill;
out came the children silent in twos and threes
holding each other by the hand, their satchels behind,
to the main square they marched their death to face
with the strange calmness of the innocent and divine.

On the day they gave their young bodies and blood
to appease German lust for reprisal and revenge
they return once a year to haunt the hill,
moonlight streams through their slender figures
their eyes twinkle at night as new born stars
their laughter floats to the village in the valley,
as peasants gather in the square to remember.

TEARLESS EYES

Ages ago a kindly old man wished
to wipe every tear from every eye;
did he wish the same for everyone
that each wipe the other's tears,
and would that have been enough.

There were tears then for wiping,
tears of sorrow, of joy and hope;
so many tears have since been shed
on the threshing floor of poverty
that eyes have been drained empty.

The same old eyes now unbelieving stare
at twice as many tearless young eyes;
a billion eyes, disembodied and lidless,
delivered of their tears grimly bare
the white hot anger raging within.

The future beckons, the old ones said;
their time for speaking is over now;
the young have their tryst with destiny
of Herculean labour, Herodian sacrifice
and the terrifying choices Gods dispense.

They seek so little, they offer so much
they share so little, they care so much
the young that dare they're everywhere
and revolution is in the sultry air.

THE KINGDOM OF DUST

Mad dogs and Englishmen no longer
go out in the midday sun
to build ephemeral empires:

Now others go out at high noon
in the neap tide of freedom
to build empires of dust.

The emaciated cow walks solemnly
with its head high in dignity
its nostrils drying in the dust.

Lean men lie in the shade, blinded
by the heroic dust of the Upanishads,
their clogged pores gasping for breath.

The dust of new Mohenjo Daros
corrodes their desiccated souls,
stifling all endeavour of the spirit.

The ashes of the Vedas rise
in a storm cloud and fall
in the canyons of their sterile hearts.

The hot wind cannot read,
it blows the writings in the dust
into the crevices of their empty minds.

Dust settles on dust,
layer upon invisible layer,
an eternity of dust.

The dust of ages, omnipresent,
embraces and envelopes all,
even time and memory.

Everything inevitably silently
crumbles into anonymous dust,
the ultimate end of gods and men.

Hooded women on their haunches sweep;
their loins heavy with the faceless dust
of unborn children of unhappy men.

And the Dust spoke unto the women
"I am immortal, indestructible;
I am the L.C.M. of all."

The women sweep and sweep and sweep,
as a deep longing fills their loins—
yearning for the unshed tears of Heaven.

OUTWARD BOUND

The Boeing's wings glint in the dawn
like a silver dart quivering to its target,
shreds of white clouds foam like suds
and hide the dirty linen below,
the morning sun shines from under
lending life here a topsy turvy air.

A child cries and a ministering angel
sheathed in metallic smiles
comes bearing aloft a feeding bottle;
an emigrant Sikh vomits into his beard,
his world is the fuselage
the aisle his road to nowhere,
as he stumbles backwards and forwards
manacled to the past by his bracelet of steel.

The diplomat sits in bleary-eyed disdain
his hands heavy with non-aligned veins
his neck hung with the yoke of poverty
his head light with spiders' webs
pondering with truth-conquering dignity
the maddening metamorphosis of truth;

There will be truth enough when there's rice enough;
whence cometh the rain, thence the wind of change.

THE NEW DAWN

In the blazing night of his earth-born life
the urgent ultimate need of man thrusts into space
streams of extravagant energies sweeping the sun,
scattering to its random orbit's relentless winds
the billowing essence of his amoebic acculturated grief,
draining the earth's spectral well of redemptive tears.

Stars blink and burn in the fermenting wilderness,
the sun's impenitent glare fails to deter
dogs, mice and monkeys in satellites and perchance
a coca-cola ad lacing the sun's inviolate waist;
sea-urchins copulate in rockets to make a genetic point
to slavic spacemen, chinese barbers and negro TV stars.

When the rains fall in the mountains of the moon
Jupiter's seasons usher in the violence of Venus
the star of man will meet its radio-active dawn;
manly mice, doggy monkeys and nordic negroes
will pitter-patter down the rutted roads of Mars,
the sea-urchinese will come into their cosmic own.

A fleeting thought in the mind of God was man,
halfway in size between an atom and a star;
he soars in search of himself abandoning his God;
In the web of his reason the annihilation of Matter
In the core of his heart the enslavement of Time
In the welter of his tongue the destruction of the Word..

THE THORN TREE

Brown mud walls bake in the blazing noon,
grey roofs stare in a death's mask;
unblinking in the midday sun
the peripheral vulture lean with hunger
watches the indifferent herd;
in the desiccated fields
scrub and brush huddle together
in rain-making bureaucratic cliques.

Eroding men plough the parched earth
into crow's feet of furrows criss-crossing
like barren thoughts in the darkening
corridors of the middle class mind;
a pall of dust hangs over all
everything is in a stupor
witless, will-less and wonderless.

My heritage is a thorn tree
that yields a fleeting flaming bouquet
to each infrequent shower of tears;
heavy with a million cancerous roots
growing by the hour, rioting and ravaging,
in monstrous matricidal need;
should I prune the roots and save the tree,
or, Godlike, sustain their chaotic course?

THE WOMAN

When you look into my eyes
you see the closed gate beyond the open,
me alone with the beating of my heart,
lying in wait beside the gate;
as our eyes meet and linger,
there is music in the lane of flowers,
the wind is tame and your eyes are soft.

But the moment is swiftly gone
the closed gate is shattered
your fickle mind quails
my quaking heart's hypocrisy
stands revealed before your gaze;
you have a human face, your eyes are of God,
despite your eyes, you still believe—

That I am really good at heart.

Your face is bright and beautiful,
your eyes are sad, so very sad,
the sadness of omniscience;
they are old and so very wise
reflecting memories of a thousand births,
and the sorrows of a thousand more,
the immortal burden of the inevitable.

In your eyes are worlds yet unborn,
the sum of man and the suffering of God,
an impenetrable forest of mushroom clouds,
the universality of hunger
the ancient agony of woman;
you are the creator, the preserver,
the mother and alas also the victim—

And I, the slayer many times over.

THE CAPE

When the sun rises over Kanyakumari
pilgrims assemble curious and credulous
their shadows on the beach are behind
and long like the ever-present past;
here the Swami and the Mahatma
hold common court with the Madonna,
three oceans meet in timeless murmur
rock and sand lead to land's end
the coconut and the unbending palm
consort with the untidy thorn;
the crow, the kite, the lonely seagull
echo the fishermen's plaintive cry—
stella maris, ora pro nobis—
star of the sea, pray for us.

The four winds gather and give chase
to clouds over empty trackless waters
unto the very edge of infinity;
eyes are drawn to the southern cross,
man is moved to sit upon a rock
and see his footprints washed away
by the advancing surf of time;
the ephemeral yields to the eternal;
the promise of death seems sweeter
than the prospect of another life,
the receding billows of eternity

reveal the shoreline of a new future
where mineral sands darkly gleam
pulsing with the nuclear death to come.

THE VALE OF KASHMIR

This was once a legendary lake
where a demon serpent held sway
until a covetous God cleft the rocks
and drained the waters to fashion
for himself a summer paradise;
now among the fir and festive pine
the poplar and chenar, many streams
meander merrily in the shade of the willow;
clouded mountains rise to snowy heights
guarding the sunlit vale and its ancient race
of lean and long-faced men and gentle women
whose smiling eyes bespeak a special breed;
every prospect in the vale pleases
and only the neighbours are vile!

Here early man fell from grace
and lost his animal innocence;
knowledge came in fits of fear and wonder
his unfettered mind soared the heavens
the sun, the moon, the wind and thunder,
the lofty peaks he peopled with Gods
in his own immortal impudent image;
proudly he strode the earth like a God
building temples from Martanda to Mahabalipura;
then he wearied, and searching within him
found the spark divine; exulting he proclaimed
Tat vam asi–That art Thou–
What shall it profit man to find himself
and lose his fellowship with other men?

THE PROPHET

Here he is again
he who wears homespun
who walks upright and says
let there be light
lead kindly light
let his kingdom come
open the windows wide
let the walls crumble
and the exodus of skeletons begin
let His word travel forth
and the fasting of the flesh
lead to the genesis of the spirit,
may there be smoke in the kitchen
let the sacred cattle be
may the steel rust in the sheath
poison not the children's beatitude
let fission lead to fusion
let two plus two make four, not more;
they say the prophet is home again
so it seems are the pharisees;
must humans eye one another
as hateful images of hostile gods?

THE ELECTIONS

They thought it could never happen here
where once tongues wagged without fear;
where dissent had been a way of life
and satyagraha a substitute for strife.

The hills were silent with untold fears,
the rivers ran low with unshed tears,
the forests whispered the anguish of Cain,
the fields gave cover to ripening pain.

Came the day one felt strangely free,
like waves of pilgrims in spiritual rut,
men and women flowed from field and hut
to keep their sacred tryst with destiny.

They flocked to the ballot box,
in anger they cast their secret lots
rejecting the old with baleful glare,
choosing the new with hopeful prayer.

They redeemed the oath their parents swore
faithful to the tenacious values of yore;
their burdens grow from hour to hour
terrifying the newly doomed to power.

They—the people—are Mahatma's heirs
to whom the nation bequeathed its cares;
the will of the many is not the voice of God,
nor the chosen few the messengers of the Lord.

The elections have come again and gone,
another Caesar heeding not demos is forlorn;
beware of those who with folded hands agree,
bearing witness to an ancient tragedy.

What of the crowding morrow, wails the ko-eel;
crows and sparrows fight over the dwindling meal,
hungry vultures circle high intent on their prey,
and doves die cooing at the dawn of each day.

ADVICE TO DIPLOMATS

These few precepts to thy memory kindly commit—
Thou art now a statesman but not before thy time
let the cares of office sit lightly on thy mind
give thy thoughts tongue only when needed
let all have thy ear and few thy voice
listen to advice and reserve thy judgement

seek the cons before the pros, be wise in counsel,
make thy speech soft and thy facts hard
In parleys let peace be thy aim.

In human relations fail not to be humane
be thou friendly but by no means familiar,
but friends well-tried and long-standing
cleave them to thy soul with hoops of steel,
keep thy humours in strict confine
be slow to quarrel and quick to make peace
dull not thy mind with needless libation;
above all true to thine own self be
for then thou need not frustrated be.

THE BRIDE BURNERS

All that men have told of tragedy is not all:
we who shook ourselves free of the alien yoke
believed our burdens had all been shattered,
but a more ancient curse still persists;
it burns brides for frigidaires,
burnt offerings to our stilled conscience,
the immensity of whose indifference
pales before its passive tolerance
of sovereign males that ordain death by fire
as wedding gifts to unwanted wives.

When she married him she believed
he was her god, he would provide and care,
in the stairway of her heaven he was the star
where she reposed her plaited tresses of hopes;
but he taught her the alphabet of acceptance
speaking with tongues of fire, his blood hot
on the scent of sacrifice, and angry she came
without jewels for his costumed inconsequence;
her kind had walked with death through the ages
with no fear in her eyes, only its relief.

The brides wear shrouds soaked in kerosene
and crowns of thorn sharpened for pain,
their lives fore-doomed to a fiery end;
the altar is laid with thistle and weed,
petty gods and ministering devils wait to strike
the match that flames to yield their immortal dust,
they haunt my dreams, they with tearless eyes;
come shadows of saints, dance to the bridal blaze!'
come drummers, beat to the crackling of fires!
come bride-burners, burnin your own pyres!'

THE HEIRS OF NEHRU

Nehru's heirs walk in the cloudless sun
biting the dust of their own confusion;
poisoned by passions; perverted by prejudice
and petrified in clerical futility.

On cold stony mountains,
in flooded valleys and parched plains
the heirs of Nehru stand guard
each with his own untold story.

Suffrage-born sepulchres in white
sport his cap and spotless coat
and oft repeat his familiar words
to a people weary of promise.

Diplomats in mild melancholy meander
along the paths of non-aligned bliss
seeking the nirvan of non-attachment
and realising only their non-entity.

So long is the night to him who sleeps
that he knows not when to waken.

As a mighty flood a sleeping village
so he swept us all along with him;

And now the flood has gone
each man has made his home
a fortress against his neighbour.

I count not those his heirs true
who assert that all who disagree err,
who dissent in order to be different
blowing soap bubbles of self esteem
and prescribing medicine for the dead.

Be ye lamps to yourselves, Nehru said
for he had faith in us
which we lack in ourselves.

Place not religion above man, he said
but rival castes and creeds contend
for dominion over death.

Seek unity in diversity, he said
but we seek only that which divides
and blame him for what we are not.

Once we thrilled to his rousing words,
now his lute lies broken and silent
and unbridled minds distort his thoughts.

The ashes of Nehru are everywhere,
the hot ashes of revolution,
I hear them singing in the wind.

When the tricolour flutters
in the brisk morning breeze
and the music of the anthem
swells every eager young heart,
boys and girls in twos and threes
march in ever-growing dignity
towards their tryst with destiny.

The woods are dark, the path steep,
the shades of night softly creep
as sages sleep in samadhi deep;

children of the sun blindly leap,
they have many a promise to keep,
many a rebirth before they can sleep.

THE AVATAR

Where the rocks of ages
huddle together in solemn conclaves
snakes and scorpions brood in anthills,
a flowering human oasis beckons,
terrifying in sanctity, its every prospect
pleases, infinitely larger than life,
there the avatar is in person to show
the path of love and the way of service
that stills the mind and frees the self.

A sudden hush fills the morning air,
a door opens and there he is poised
on the threshold of our awareness
garbed in the red-gold of the rising sun,
his hair in glorious riotous disarray
like tongues of fire leaping in the dark;
eyes overflowing with concern he comes,
spirals of subtle energy envelop all
in a vast encircling aura of compassion.

As he moves men, women and children
fall at his feet clutching and kissing
in the divine ecstasy of love responding to love,
their eyes stream with tears, voices whimper,
arms stretch outwards imploring him
to lighten their burden of sorrows,
hundreds of pleading eyes pursue
him in silent wondrous adoration,
as he stops to heal, console and bless.

Some have their minds and bodies healed,
some their stubborn doubts confirmed,

some bask in his glory, some stop at the brink;
the avatar is there to redeem an ancient pledge
to be at hand where he is needed most,
his the message – let the spirit prevail,
ours the dilemma of denying the ego,
his the agony of preaching love,
ours of causing his endless rebirth.

GUNGA DIN–A BARRACK ROOM BALLAD

(The allusion is to Yahya Khan)

What ho ! What manner of man is this
Who holds his paunch in parenthesis?
By Gawd, it looks like Gunga Din
Come out of Hell with his goat skin.

Salaam, sahib, it's me all right
I'm General now when I ain't tight,
Me army's bogged down in the east
I need your help to say the least.

King Dick, the Sick, took counsel with
Harry, the Messenger, of Monolith,
For Gunga Din despite his hide
was white as Dick, all white inside.

Many a swig he had given Dick
And sticky things for Harry to lick
No better friend on the way to Chine
Than the whorin' drinkin' Gunga Din.

Dick was true to his tricky core
He told Harry "Get the guns ashore",
For when it comes to bloody slaughter
Din can hold his own, the rotter.

Tilt to Din, Help him win
Do as I say, To hell with sin,
Stop the aid, Damn the Injuns,
Send the fleet, Forward the guns!

It was all Din! Din! Din!
Old grinnin' gruntin' Gunga Din,
Harry was gettin' merry hell
Twice an hour from Dicky's cell.

But nothin' could help the blighter Din
Nor Dick nor Harry could save his skin;
He would have made a better bhisti,
If he hadn't left his blasted bustee?

ALICE IN BOGLAND

(Trogs are Arabs and frogs are Jews)

Alice came upon a curious frog
by the name of General Jabberzog,
hopping mad in the land of trog,
squealing like an Orwellian hog;

"I will be judge, I will be jury,
I have a memory longer than history,
'Tis God who gave us all the bogs
there's no room in them for trogs."

'Tis time to ask, said Alice with a nod,
why frogs should be the chosen of God,
and why they did multiply
without adding to their joy ?

Bloating with rage, the frog replied
"You are not to question why,
we're here to stay and stay we will,
a pretext is as good as a principle;

we're bigger than trogs and know better
we take what we see, like the mad hatter,
the more bogs we keep, the less to win,
we'll leave the trogs our Cheshire grin!"

How silly can these creatures be
said Alice as she left them for tea;
the trogs were crying for their bogs,
their tears dissolving in clouds of fogs.

And General Jabberzog unseeing stood
in the quivering shade of a cobra's hood,
sure as hell that God's on his side;
but really it is late even for suicide.

THE SANDS OF SINAI

Flaming pyres of flying machines and men
fall on the desert sand revealing the hulks
of twisted tanks brooding over their dead,
the heavy guns are silent, their bellies cold;
a frosty stillness sweeps over the land
freezing the ravaged roofs, battered bunkers,
nameless mounds and scarred earth –
ghostly harvest of the fallen man.

Women in mourning gather, like shadows
in the moonlit darkness of secret sorrows,
to search among the memoried years
of woe from the mould of Time;
the sphinx weeps and the cross bleeds,
as the crescent and the star bite the dust;
the young die that the old may live
to breed another generation fit to kill.

Arab sands are soft and deep
and warm with the freshly dead;
they wait for those about to die
and are ready for those alive,

the wild of tongue and red of eye
clamour for glory or gain;
the sands of Sinai will have no peace
until the dead rise to bury the living.

PING-PONG
(*The allusion is to Mao Tse Tung*)

In the beginning was Pong
he created power
and the power was with him;
the Word of Pong moved over the earth
dispensing power and darkness fell;
when Pong said–let there be war, there was
and Pong saw that it was good.

Years passed and the shadows lengthened
Pong, now old, went to the great wall
and what he saw he did not fancy;
there was much power and contention
two great lights, one ruling the day
the other ruling the night;
this was not to his liking.

Behold, said Pong, there are dragons beyond,
let power be replaced by play;
Ping, the chamberlain, brought unto him
a ball that bounced with each blow;
he tossed it to Pong who tossed it to Ping
so it went, on and on, back and forth,
and Pong saw that it was good.

The word of Pong went forth again
dispensing the news of his love game
to the eagle and the bear and others,
even a cat may now cross the wall
with a bat and ball to play ping-pong;
for in every ping there is a pong
and in every right a former wrong.

CHINESE LETTERS

Like Pierrot I am a lunar traveller
circling the earth in a mandarin's sleeves;
I see Chinese letters on window panes
finely etched with celestial irony—
minute patterns of morning frost
ever changing with the sun's mood,
as puppets do at the end of a string.

Chinese letters, strange garments for thought,
concealing more and revealing even less,
life-like they move beckoning, mocking,
posturing, protesting and beckoning again—
a kaleidoscope of endless intricate designs
turning and turning like the old mill
timeless in its tireless turning.

Morning frost full of magic and mystery
freezing, thawing and freezing again
signifying nothing and yet everything.
I see Chinese letters in fortune cookies,
revelations of aging medicine men
and dreams that only the young dream
before the dawn of each new misery.

THE SNOW

Softly, silently, the snow
sifts to my windowsill
white, pure and powdery
all night the curtain falls
and all through the day,
whipped by wailing winds
it spits at pedestrians
rounding street corners.

My waiting heart looks out
through morning drifts
and dreams in the dark
of snow-women in the sun,
of wasted white winters
and waters long run dry.

Softly, silently, the snow
falls in the seedless womb
of the woman who sleeps,
dreaming of another spring.

THE AFTERNOON

Gently the noonlight comes, and day
ascending bursts into full glory;
no curtains in the dark
no protests, no whimpers.

Softly the noonlight shimmers
and day lingers on smiling
that west is east again
all in its own timeless turning.

Oh, the memories of days departed
eternal now in every sleepless dream;
could we but soar upwards and away
like a celestial body to another day.

But we walk in time not of our creation;
forgive me if I curse the coming night,
forgive me if I whisper to the wind
to steal the day and imprison its light.

THE PARTING

Tears do not matter now;
the beautiful in its moment
is truth triumphant
and abides with me
as long as love labours
and the heart endures.

My love defeats me,
I cannot stop its tides
any more than my breathing,
nor reason it away
since reason be not
its root nor seed.

Memories of winter snow
flake my love's slumbering;
each tearless parting
is like the lily bulb
buried in darkness
waiting for light.

Somewhere we meet
that is nowhere;
something we have
that is nothing;
we are as the earth
partners in its dying.

SANTA MARIA DEL MAR

The non-aligned flew into Havana Bay
to confabulate on a fine sunny day;
birds of one feather, though not one mind
they opened the door to yet another kind
the flight of progressives into their nest
at home with the east, at odds with the west;
a toast to their future in pink mariposa
was made by the host, the restless Roa.

Never before was so much said
never so many by so few led
their analysis is always so right
all blame belongs to imperialist might
no foreign thief may rob nature's weal
no foreign base without the people's seal
America be damned from Indo-Chine
all the way to Arab Palestine!

The warm sand under the gentle sea
the cool wind in the casuarina tree
the silence of the night free of strife,
neither hope nor fear is for the poor
only the struggle for the paucity of life;
the glint of the sun in Castro's eyes,
the Cuban wave, like white horses in unity,
racing in the shoreless sea of eternity.

THE OUTSIDER

Do you rember the old ecstasy,
the gleaners in the gathering gloom
of mustard fields in yellowing bloom;
the carousel in the clair de lune,
the eyes behind the veil, and the light
in the shade, flesh upon yielding flesh
like the flotsam of a shipwreck,
the divine grace of the silent word.

When the mind is quiescent
like the egg in an ocean of caviar,
come with me and make rude noises
at ideologues and monumental bores;
come and move the shadows in my soul,
the shadows of the dead who were mad
whose terrifying thoughts the east wind brings,
and the rain—it always pours in my heart.

When the mind is in fever
come with me into the limbo of ennui,
where the pious agnostic and doubtfree sceptic
consort with the sentimental-cynic
in the unperfect paradise of the sinning saint;
Come and share with the enslaved free
the peace of surrender to the timeless tedium
of the lost moment and the unread unknown.

My past is in the future
my future is what I forget
my present is the memory
of the empty echo of the hollow hand
upon my other hand; I am not me—
would that I were, or that I were not;
I'd rather be the afterglow of a kind deed
than the God-eunuch I strive to be.

ON POLLUTION

Vast herds of mushroom clouds
move in slow deliberate procession;
like some great canopy of doom
they stretch to limitless latitudes
hiding sun, sky, space and light.

Monstrous feathered breast of man
nesting in silence on sullied earth
sheltering huddled rebellious birds
that strain with savage power
spitting dragon fire into the gloom.

Angry wings glinting in the half light
roar into the wind slicing the fog,
upward they speed seeking escape,
and finding none, return sullen
like summer hawks to the clouded nest.

MAO NI HAN
(*Chinese spelling of Moynihan*)

There fell on the U.N. a shooting star
launched from a flannelled faculty bar;
it landed among the smouldering ends
of diverse opinions and colliding trends
spreading more heat than light;
never was there such a fright.

The missile's name was Mao Ni Han,
an overgrown luminous leprechaun;
to wogs and commies it gave merry hell,
but seldom waited to hear them tell
what they thought of its own pell mell;
which was sad, for it really meant well.

It twinkled at the Press for a change
it shot from the hip wide of the range
wounding friends hiding in the dark,
its bite was not as bad as its bark,
it raved and ranted hurling threats dire
at all, but the Chinese, its celestial ire.

This avenging angel of the free
took on the world with more than blarney;
it kept its faith, its words had stings,
its end was in keeping with its beginnings;
it wasn't its fault, for let it be said—
it was God who put ideas into its head!

ON READING KATE MILLETT

If Freud was wrong about women,
is Kate Millet right about men?

Said Henry Miller with phallic elan—
I am more than God; I am Man,
I have infinite power to annihilate.

Says Salome with inhibitions none—
But I am even more; I am Woman
I have endless power to emasculate.

And Erik Erikson's man-woman,
the new sexual balance in one,
has a man's face and a woman's behind!

is it the answer to male domination,
or the fruit of female liberation?

A MEDLEY

The mind has reasons that the aging heart
does not comprehend, now more than ever
seems it ripe to live the treasured day-dreams
of times past, to summon up remembrance
of wasted years, as the waves ebb away
from the jewelled fields of alien corn;
summer's lease had all too brief a life,
a lingering voice in an autumn meadow
entices with wanton wayward thoughts
the hope that is embalmed in tears
and rises from fears of the crack of doom;
it beckons with a benediction, as to a roving bee,
to pause, drink and cheat itself into thinking
that many a blossom has yet to fade;
the flower that once bloomed forever dies;
never blooms the rose so red
as where a fallen angel has bled.

The bird of time has yet a little way
how short a while we have here to stay,
bring the cup that clears today of past regrets
and tomorrow of future fears and laments;
I came here knowing not why
nor whence nor who am I,
and out I shall go as the wind

along the waste to the beat of the drum;
one sip is all I had of the well of life,
I asked what lamp the Fates had to guide,
'Blind acceptance' is what they replied;
there is a veil beyond which I cannot see,
there is a door behind me I cannot open,
many a gem rests in the still unfathomed cave
of the mind waiting for wings of thought
on every wind that tolls the parting of day,
and for the flash upon the in-dwelling eye.

THE NEXT WAR

Snow flakes kiss my weeping window
seeking entry into the shrouded room
where I sit peering into the future,
listening to the recorded melodies
of the last war, when men in uniform
massed in thousands heard in silence
songs of home, the parting of lovers,
the romance of long forgotten heroes
and a far away country whose memories
the moonlight sprayed on silver waters.

Those of them still alive are greying
their once bright eyes heavy with sleep;
like them I too think of the next war
of its melodies and romance, wondering
if the life of a newborn child will last,
if the hates that lie deep are ripe for tears,
it the dust of broken words will ever rest,
if nuclear war is the ultimate end;
what man has made he must unmake
or his future a never ending nuclear wake.

THE PROFILE

When you came into the room
bringing a breath of fresh air
sunlight was draped around you,
the selfless side of your profile
matched the openness of your smile,
something in the tilt of your face
made overtures to a second spring,
all heads turned to gaze upon
your palpable enticing contours
in the expanding silence of wonder;
I was at the edge of my drowning pool.

Somewhere behind the wall of your smile
is the other side of your fateful profile,
there the long grass hides a rod of iron
with thorns threading among the petunias,
and a pair of watchful cold eyes
repel the touch, clouding the mystery
of the amber light of not now-not yet,
the half life of guilt and innocence
in reading old love letters after hours;
I am falling into a black hole
where ambivalence is a way of life.

KURUKSHETRA REVISITED

Clear-eyed Arjuna scanning the ruin ahead
his heart overcome with sorrow asked
which will be worse – to win or lose,
will the few with limitless nuclear power
condemn the many to karmas not their own,
will the mind that moves the soul prevail?
pondering deep into the darkening night
of the long journey of man to his doom,
the silent Krishna had reason to lament
and washed his hands in innocence divine.

Soldiers and airmen will not fall with glory
like autumn leaves to sprout again in spring,
souls of sailors will not return as sea gulls,
warmongers will no longer sit on moonbeams
reaching to the stars for their profits;
no more the chivalries and virtues of war
nor hopes of living to fight another day,
foes and friends and neutrals alike
will perish together in the nuclear night,
their fathers' souls will rise to die again.

Nevermore the ways of our fathers nevermore,
for in one mad act man can outwit his God,
and attain the nirvan of his own oblivion;
in his final fling of self defence there lies
the destruction of the world to make a legal point
of supervening sovereignty in pursuit of security;
helpless in the iron grip of cause and effect
his means shape his ends baring the moral flaw
and epic pride that feed the fires of his pyre;
alas that which may save him will die with him.

THE DILEMMA

Darkly shining with his own divine light
born immaculate, his innocence doomed
by the ravages of self knowledge,
the seed of mortality grows hourly
with the gathering force of the presentiment
of chaos ordained with the precision of a mind
made in the image of a God
that unwisely dispensed freedom of choice
between peace of extinction and war of existence;
man trembles on the brink of self destruction.

Strange passions coil within his spine's nest
savage stirrings seek the radiance of release
how long has he to wait by the tree of knowledge

resurrecting each memory hoping for a new discovery;
he cannot comprehend the core of himself,
the boundless mystery of his ripening
must be shared lest it be too much,
or else it must run its relentless course;
take care not to love yourself alone
the grace you need cannot thus be known.

THE TUNNEL

In Cuffe Parade gleaming concrete towers
rise upwards through sullied skies
on land reclaimed from the unrepentent sea;
in this isolate uneasy haven
there are no blessings in sight,
everywhere men and women drag their feet
weighed down by the womb's curse,
burdened by the yoke of adult suffrage
they move like some procession of the blind
inexorably into a tunnel with no exit.

THE BARBARIANS

As far as the eyes can see
forty times forty chimneys
pollute the morning air,
the sky is leaden, the clouds smoke-filled,
the sun a distant baleful glow,
stray dogs snarl at street urchins
raucous is the dialogue of crows,
noisome sparrows fly in and out,
the vulture drops a human bone
a widow shatters the morning calm,
temples and mosques in pink and blue
huddle together in the humid air,
women in single file carry pots to the well

children of slums run in spurts of energy,
their young bodies twisted, their eyes bulging.

Upon the sea rocks rise
forty times forty phallic symbols,
festering life is everywhere
nothing inhibits fertility
in the mad race against death,
neither pollution nor hunger
restrains the awesome fecundity;
the souls of old men sit idle
each in his labyrinth of silence,
as the siren blares out the time
small household gods tremble
for them neither death nor old age,
only the lingering of a half life,
will the new barbarians give them
a half death or a half nothing?

THE NUCLEAR END

I dreamt I saw the other night
our end in rings of endless light;
there was an empty moment void of sound,
the earth missed a beat in its pulsing rhythm,
in the brilliance of a thousand competing suns
sprang a hundred thousand giant mushrooms
of clashing atoms fusing in whirling profusion;
the afterglow of flaming fireballs revealed
a desolation of radioactive rotting flesh;
the half-living envying the dead,
in half-lives of monstrous moronic years
of nuclides, isotopes and ionising rays.

THE PEARLS

Far away they were taken to clear foreign lands,
plant fields of cane with their own hands,
their backs as strong as the sturdy loins
that gave them birth, the boundless Bharat Mata,
necks in yoke they pulled their loads unbending
pride of ancient race in every thought and deed;
as the oyster deep under the sea in pain
gathers each thread to weave its secret within,
our pain is their sorrow, they are our pearls.

A PRAYER

Ask not the young with their dreams
to lead us out of the bondage of our minds;
let the domain of their spirit be free
let them see our enemies as us
let discords be resolved in harmony
let wishes be free of bloodstains
let us live in peace free of arms
wait not until conditions are right,
is there not enough of nuclear might
to blow us out of divinity's sight?
Peace now when fields are still green
and birds on the wing can be seen.

MYSELF

No, come not near – you may see my tears
hiding in the rain cloud behind the wind
that scatters autumn leaves as they fall.

No, come not near – you may hear my heart
pounding its fateful arterial message
to flush its gutters free of dirt.

No, come not near – you may smell my fear
that the flowers of grass may uproot themselves
and go marching towards the setting sun.

No, come not near – you may feel my grief
for butterflies snared by flowers
and doomed to die by night.

No, come not near – you may learn my truth
I am not alone, I have a hundred conflicting selves
that even a hundred graves cannot contain.

No, come not near – remain a distant star,
shed the peace that passeth all understanding
on my many selves that contend for dominion.

THE LOTUS AND THE TULIP

Only I know every breath you draw
for every breath is my own;
I gave you life to grow
into the ever-widening circle
of immaculate incarnation.

I am hidden behind the curtain
of your petals of mystery;
I am sought but seldom found
I am the jewel within
and you the lotus above.

I held you poised in high disdain,
I was broken so you may live
a brief exotic life in a bowl
waxed with another's love;
You were the tulip and I the stem.

THE PUPPETS

The living are locked within themselves
like birds without wings aching to fly,
the reality of self are shadows
of endless longings never the same,
as the wind whispers, lingers and dies
there is stillness in their hearts.

As the wind changes they come alive
with Punchinellos pulling strings
Peirrots singing to the moon
Harlequins circling the earth
Columbines waiting for love;
All the world's a puppet show.

*Haiku**

THE MIND

I peep into my mind
butterflies are everywhere
I see but one flower

I chant the mantra
om shanti om shanti om
my mind is at rest.

I enlarge my mind
my universe is a balloon
an expanding void.

* A Japanese poetic form in 5 - 7 - 5 syllable verses depicting images and emotions frozen in tranquillity.

I am not alone
I am altogether three
public, private and thee.

Who art thou but me?
in this terrestrial galaxy
I am the mystery.

Haiku

IMAGES

The pond is still
the watching bird waits no more
a fish leaps for joy.

The hedge is in bloom
humming bees are on the wing
honey for the home.

Raindrops on the roof
smell of wet earth everywhere
a woman's heart sings.

By the waterfall
the sun maiden sprays her hair
rainbows in my eyes.

Footprints hide the sands
the tide brings waves and winds
the sands are seen again.

GOD'S SOLILOQUY

In many a place for many a year
man raised his hands in awe and fear
of night and shade, rain and flood,
thunder and lightning, pain and blood,
the quaking of earth, the funeral pyre,
sea and storm and sacrificial fire.

Out of his abyssmal fear he invented me
to cope with what lay beyond his sanity;
gave me powers over all things and men
held me responsible for things beyond his ken;
waged wars in my name to further his ends
with his ego all men to his will he bends.

He found he had a troublesome soul
wanted me to reincarnate him whole;
such is his passion for immortality
he longs for rebirths until eternity;
but to be or not to be
is not the choice he's given me.

I am the bush that burns, yet not burned,
I am called by a thousand names unearned,
I am not to be what I want, if I exist,
if I do, I would rather be an atheist,
am I the light within, the still small voice,
or his better self, thus to soliloquise?

EVEREST

How silly to call me Everest
I'm never alone, nor ever at rest;
if a Jap isn't skiing on my head
the Chinese are polluting my bed;
the British seem to think I'm theirs
to climb every weekend in pairs;

the Yanks are ever at their best
bugging everything including my crest;
the French are much too full of zest
mounting my back their manhood to test;
Germans are doubtless a glorious pest
climbing everything without even a vest;
the solemn Swiss stop often to piss
scattering icicles into every crevice;
Indians feel they're climbing to heaven
because they've left behind their women;
I'm no litter box for flags in the sky,
no common heritage of mankind am I;
I appeal to the UN to halt this nonsense
and build me a non-national fence!

A MADRIGAL

What ho! what manner of realism is new
to call as consensus the opinion of a few;
how clever of the nuclear parvenu
to ban arms that do not exist than do,
to terrify all to deter but one,
to assure all and protect none,
to threaten war to prevent one;
heigh ho, heigh ho, it's the witches' brew,
cheer up, my lads, we'll soon be dead,
isn't it better than being bloody red?
swing high, swing low, on the nuclear nonny-no!

THE U.N. REPORT

When the sub-committee has had its say,
the main Committee at a later day
tries by talk and art and craft
to change the words of every draft;
but the report is none the better
by changing even every letter.

The French translation is always wrong,
the Spanish version much too long;
The English text could be improved
if all the wording were removed;
in fact the best that could befall
is to have no report at all.

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